THE

AMERICAN WEST

Cover: The beach of Nome, Alaska, at the turn-of-the-century. Geographically unlikely, almost totally isolated for seven months of the year, and brutally harsh, this ramshackle example of instant civilization erected on the edge of the Seward Peninsula was nevertheless one of the great boomtowns of the gold rush West—and the last. For more on Nome and its people, see William Bronson's article on page 20 of this issue.

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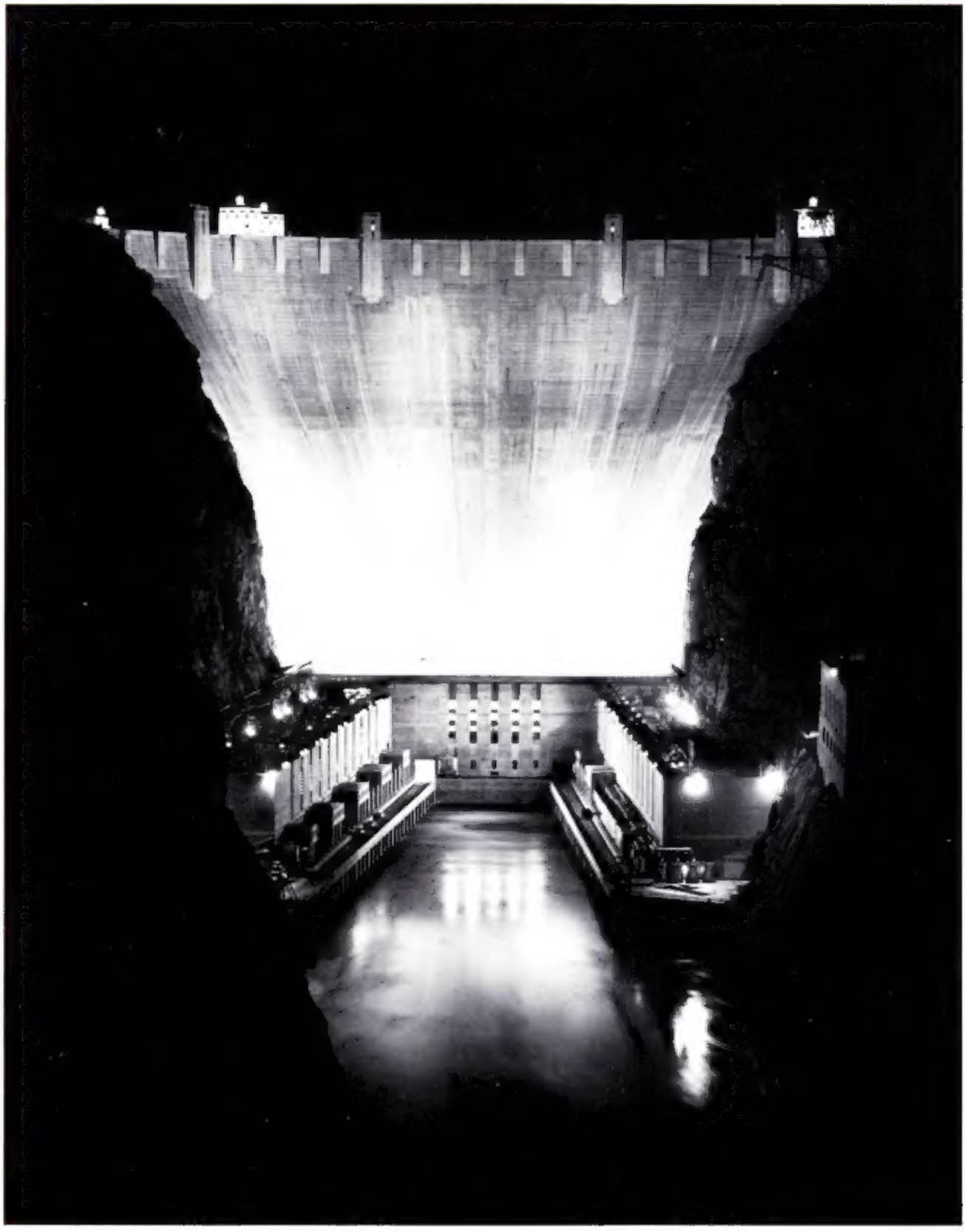
Yosemite Falls (photograph by Ansel Adams).



CONQUEST of the COLORADO

Earth-Movers, Dam-Builders, and the End of a Free River

BY T. H. WATKINS

It would be difficult to imagine a more stunning example of the scope and ingenuity of twentieth-century technology than the dams of the Colorado River system. In a little over two generations, the wild Colorado has been harnessed by a series of dams strung like beads on a thread from the Gulf of California to the mountains of Wyoming. The living river has been sectioned off into placid desert lakes throughout much of its length, and the river's primordial task of carrying the **massif** of the Colorado Plateau to the sea, bit by grainy bit, has been interrupted, and will remain interrupted for the lifetimes of our children's children and beyond.

All in the name of empire, an empire of water—water for land, for people, for industry; water to power the generation of electricity to light all the dark corners of the American Southwest; water controlled and channeled, tamed so that it can no longer destroy.

The conquest of this river was the great technological adventure of its age. Listen to poet May Sarton, celebrating the joys of Boulder Dam in 1942:

Not built on terror like the empty pyramid,
Not built to conquer but illuminate a world:
It is the human answer to a human need,
Power in absolute control, freed as a gift,
A pure creative act, God when the world was born,
It proves that we have built for life and built for love
And when we are all dead, this dam will stand and give.

We have since learned—or it is to be hoped that we have learned—that this dream, like most technological dreams, had the power to diminish as well as enrich the quality of man's life. The conquest of the Colorado stands as an embodiment of what we are capable of destroying even as we create.

The adventure began very badly. When in 1901 the California Development Company, owners, operators, and chief promoters of Imperial Valley, California, cut into the river near Pilot Knob Mesa, opposite Yuma, and diverted four hundred thousand acre-feet of water into the valley via the Imperial Canal, it began a chain of events that destroyed the company, nearly annihilated the valley, and created the 150-square-mile Salton Sea—the largest man-made lake of its time, even though created through sheerest accident. During the spring floods of 1905, the river smashed through the inadequate restraints placed upon it and raged downhill into the valley, tearing up the land and ruining farm after farm; it would take two years of back-breaking effort and more than three million dollars to close the breach, an accomplishment in itself one of the engineering wonders of the day. As poorly executed and ultimately disastrous as it was, this early attempt to tap the waters of the Colorado was the first major effort on the part of modern man to turn the river to his own ends. It would not be the last.

One of the first irrigation ventures to be authorized under the aegis of the newly formed Reclamation Service was the Yuma Project of 1904, designed to deliver Colorado River water to some sixty-eight thousand cultivated acres in the Yuma Valley. The Laguna Diversion Dam, the first dam on the river, was strung across the Colorado thirteen miles north of Yuma, with a complicated siphon system that transported water from the California side under the river to Arizona. The project began construction in 1905 and was completed in 1910, at a cost of nine million dollars. Shortly afterward the Reclamation Service's first large, multipurpose water resources project got underway on Central Arizona's Salt River, three hundred miles to the east, a major tributary of the Gila. The original project, including Theodore Roosevelt Dam and power plant on the Salt River and Granite Reef Diversion Dam downstream, was completed in 1911 at a cost of ten million dollars. The Gila itself was presented with Coolidge Dam in 1928, constructed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Upper Basin of the river system came into its share of early developments, too, including the Grand Valley Project on the Gunnison River in Colorado; the Uncompahgre Project, which brought water through a six-mile tunnel from the Gunnison to the Uncompahgre Valley; and the Strawberry Valley project in southern Utah. The total cost of these Upper Basin projects exceeded eleven million dollars. By the end of the 1920's, then, tens of millions of dollars and twenty-five years had made a fair start on the piecemeal conquest of the

Colorado. By then, however, there were men dreaming even bigger things for the river, the most ambitious reclamation enterprise of its day—the Colorado River Project.

The history of the Colorado River Project is as complicated as a game of three-dimensional chess, involving a dozen bickering factions, convoluted political entanglements, complex financing, quarreling states, and questions of national, and even international, import. It began, once again, in the Imperial Valley.

The river had been turned back to its legitimate course in 1907 and partially blocked by the completion of Laguna Dam in 1910, but it had not been tamed. In 1910 it broke out of its old channel again and emptied into Volcano Lake, southeastward of the valley. Imperial farmers, with the aid of one million dollars in federal funds, constructed new levees and held the river off. At its very next flood, the river wiped out the new levees.

It was obvious that there would be no compromising with this river. Each year, it laid down a foot of silt, raising its stream bed. Each year, the Imperial Irrigation District (formed in 1911 and now owners and operators of the Imperial Canal and all its works) was forced to add another foot of height to its levees. The process could not go on forever, and the inhabitants of the valley went about the business of making money under the constant threat that all their investments could be wiped out at any moment.

The position of the hapless valley farmers was not, in their view, noticeably improved by the fact that a generous portion of "their" water was being siphoned off to Mexican land. In 1904, since the Imperial Canal ran for most of its length through Mexican territory, the California Development Company had agreed that up to half of the canal's diverted water would be reserved for use on the rich delta lands below the border. More than eight hundred thirty thousand acres of this land was in the ownership of a Los Angeles syndicate headed by Harry Chandler of the Los Angeles **Times**, a circumstance that would have measurable effect on Imperial Valley's plans for the future.

One obvious solution to the Mexican problem was another canal, this one to cut across only American territory and to be called, reasonably enough, the All-American Canal. In 1917, Phil Swing, a lawyer for the I. I. D. (and later a congressman serving the same interests), went to Washington to talk to the head of the Bureau of Reclamation, Arthur Powell Davis. Swing persuaded Davis to investigate Imperial's water difficulties, and four years later the Bureau recommended the construction not only of the All-American Canal but also of a large water-storage, flood-control, and power-producing dam on the Colorado. The site ultimately chosen was Boulder Canyon.

States in the river's Upper Basin, which included parts of New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming, set up an immediate howl, complaining that their need for the river's water was not being adequately considered. As early as 1919, representatives from all seven states in the Basin, including California, Nevada, and Arizona, had met in Salt Lake City to discuss the river's future and had formed the League of the Southwest as an organizational basis for further discussions and agreements, if any. At that conference, the governor of Utah had succinctly described the Upper Basin's view: "The water should first be captured and used while it is young," he said, "for then it can be recaptured as it returns from the performance of its duties and thus be used over and over again." The Lower Basin states disagreed vehemently, and the haggling continued through two more conferences the following year, accompanied by periodic sniping in the **Times** from Harry Chandler, who was dead against **any** development on the river that might affect the water supply of his Mexican lands.

Finally, in November of 1922, seven state commissioners met with Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover in Santa Fe and, after fifteen days of bitterly contentious bargaining, hammered out the Colorado River Compact, dividing the river's annual average flow of twenty million five hundred thousand acre-feet* of water: Seven million five hundred thousand acre-feet would go to each basin yearly; the Lower Basin was given the right to an additional one million if needed; and if any river water was allocated to Mexico through international treaty, it would first come from the excess above the already apportioned sixteen million acre-feet—if this was not enough, each basin would donate an equal share from its allotment to make up the deficiency. Each of the commissioners and Hoover signed the compact, and from them it went to the legislatures of the respective states for ratification. One by one, the states ratified it, until only Arizona was left.

Arizona refused, knowing that ratification would smooth the way for the construction of the All-American Canal and Boulder Dam, and the "thievery" of what Arizona considered her own "natural resource"—the electric power-producing potential of the Colorado's Arizona canyons. Moreover, Arizona wanted a dam at Bridge Canyon, some one hundred miles upriver from Boulder, so that she could construct a gravity canal to carry water to her parched midsection. Arizona, in her own view, was gaining nothing from the compact and giving away her right to use Colorado water for her own needs. "I'll be damned," said her governer, George W. P. Hunt, "if California ever will have any water from the Colorado River as long as I am governor of Arizona." Pragmatically, the remaining states rewrote the agreement and passed it through again as a **six**-state Colorado River Compact.

At this time, another element entered the by now multi-leveled entanglements of the Colorado River Project. Los Angeles, already beginning to display the characteristics of the extruded metropolis she would become, needed water; and so did the rest of Southern California. In 1923, the head of the Los Angeles Water and Power District, William Mulholland (he had built the mammoth, two-hundred-mile Los Angeles Aqueduct between Owens Valley and the city ten years before), proposed the world's largest aqueduct —two hundred forty miles across deserts and mountains from the Colorado to the cities of Southern California—and laid the foundation the following year by putting in an early bid for more than one million acre-feet a year of the Lower Basin's water allotment.

While the Los Angeles Water and Power District laid its enormous plans, the proponents of the Boulder Dam and All-American Canal projects found their proposals strangling in a snake's nest of congressional antagonisms and vacillation. In 1923 Phil Swing, by now a congressman from the Imperial Valley district, introduced his version of the Boulder Dam bill to the House, and for the next four years saw it disappear again and again, smothered in committee. To the natural enemies of the project—not just Arizona but all the congressmen who wanted their states to grab off a share of the public trough first—was added a lobbying association of private power companies, which waved the red flag of "socialism" and vehemently opposed government-owned power projects like Boulder Dam. Over in the Senate, California's Hiram Johnson found the going no easier, although he had a powerful ally in William Randolph Hearst's newspapers, which promoted the project quite as vigorously as Harry Chandler and the Los Angeles **Times** opposed it. On February 21, 1927, Johnson actually managed to manipulate his version of the bill to the floor of the Senate. There it met opposition in the form of a herculean three-day filibuster by Arizona's senators Henry Ashurst and Ralph Cameron, who managed to kill the possibility of a vote before the adjournment of Congress on March 4.

Swing reintroduced his own bill to the House when the next

* One acre-foot of water, it should be pointed out, is approximately enough to support five people living in an urban environment for a year—or, as W. H. Hutchinson notes in his recent **California**, enough to flush about sixty thousand suburban toilets simultaneously.

Man and the Colorado: The immense scope of the Boulder Dam Project is suggested by the photograph at the left, a view of the river as it flowed free between the gargantuan walls of Black Canyon in 1922; the ultimate site of the dam is marked by the small point jutting into the river in the center.

The complexity and megalithic bulk of the great dam would have rivaled the masonry of a cyclops. The scores of men scattered over the top and sides of the monster in the photograph above are rendered almost invisible by the sheer immensity of what they are building. Overhead, a bucket containing sixteen tons of concrete skims down toward one of the house-sized forms; after spreading, its load will add perhaps another inch or two to the height of one tiny part of the dam.

session of Congress opened in December. It had been much revised by then to satisfy as many of the dissident factions as possible, but again it languished in committee until May 15, 1928, when Swing persuaded the House Rules Committee to send it to the floor for a debate. Antagonists of the bill managed to postpone a vote until May 25, but it was their last effort. That day, the bill passed the House with a resounding majority. Johnson was less fortunate that year. Again, Senator Ashurst and Arizona's newest senator, Carl Hayden, put on a three-day filibuster in May, holding off a vote until their allies were able to put through a motion for adjournment, which passed on May 28.

When Congress reopened in December, however, Arizona's last-ditch efforts crumbled when a motion was made and passed to limit debate on the bill, thus smothering any possibility of filibuster. The bill came to a vote and passed the Senate on December 14. It provided for the construction of Boulder Dam, Imperial Dam on the lower reaches of the river, and the All-American Canal. It limited California's share of Colorado water to four million four hundred thousand acre-feet a year, plus a share in any surplus in any given year, and up to half the "extra" one million acre-feet provided to the Lower Basin by the Colorado River Compact.

The House expeditiously agreed to the various amendments introduced by the Senate, and on December 21, 1928, the Swing-Johnson Bill was signed into law by President Calvin Coolidge. Arizona made one last effort by taking her case to the Supreme Court, but was ruled down in May of 1931. After more than ten years of haggling, the All-American Canal and Boulder Dam were political, if not yet tangible, realities.

The third component of the three-part Colorado River Project, the Colorado River Aqueduct, took nearly as long to reach even political reality. Surveyors had laid out the route of the aqueduct shortly after the organization of the Metropolitan Water District in 1928, but before any work could be started it was necessary to manage the passage of a two hundred twenty million dollar bond issue for the construction of a diversion dam on the river and the two hundred forty mile aqueduct itself.

After a six-week saturation campaign that took advantage of every means of communication then available (including messages on milk bottles and a sound movie entitled **Thirst**), Southern California's voters went to the polls and on September 29, 1931, passed the issue—one of the largest in the region's history, and for its time an astounding sum.

All stages of the Colorado River Project were now assembled on paper: Boulder Dam; Parker Dam, to store water for Southern California; the Colorado River Aqueduct; Imperial Dam, to store and desilt water for the Imperial Valley; and the All-American Canal. The central factor in the whole project was Boulder Dam; its reservoir would store and regulate water delivered to Imperial Reservoir and to Lake Havasu behind Parker Dam; its bulk would give the users of the river their first workable protection from flood; and the power it produced would give the engineers of the M.W.D. the energy they needed to lift water sixteen hundred feet from the river's bed over mountains and deserts to the coastal plain of Southern California. Boulder Dam was the key to empire.

The hard-hat American engineer, with his khaki uniform, his pocketed slide rule, his tough determination to conquer any obstacle, great or small, was fully as romantic a figure in the 1930's as the American astronaut is today. He had built roads in the mountains of Peru, dams in Asia, and bridges all over the world. His expertise was in demand everywhere; he was considered one of the finest flowers of America's technological coming-of-age. The image was linked to another that captured the fancy of the era: the hard-nosed independent industrialist, whose foresight, integrity, school-of-hard-knocks experience, and gambler's instinct had transformed the face of America and given raw power to the concept of free enterprise. There was a great deal that was false in both images, of course, but there was also enough truth to satisfy the demands of an age that could still look with missionary zeal upon the act of literally remaking the world.

In Boulder Dam the two images were commingled dramatically. It was the biggest dam in the world, an American dam through and through. Its design and construction were a monumental engineering accomplishment; the organization and logistics of the job, a stunning example of America's industrial know-how. The combination was irresistible to the public mind, and before the nation became comfortably smug with a surfeit of technological wonders, Boulder Dam stood as an embodiment of all the material virtues of America.

Long before passage of the Swing-Johnson Bill in 1928, the

organization of the complex of construction industrialists that would become known as the Six Companies, Inc., creators of Boulder Dam, began to coalesce. The heart of the organization was the Utah Construction Company, founded by a pair of Mormon brothers, E. O. Wattis and W. H. Wattis, in 1875. It was this company that built the seven-million-dollar Hetch Hetchy Dam in 1917, an experience that whetted the brothers' appetite for more such projects. In 1922, their near monopoly of the mountain states was challenged by Harry W. Morrison, of the Morrison-Knudsen Company of Idaho, and the Wattis brothers invited Morrison to join them in a dam-building partnership. The partnership was an effective one, and was strengthened immeasurably in 1925, when Frank T. Crowe came into the organization as an engineer to head up its dam-building projects.

After twenty years with the Bureau of Reclamation, Crowe had worked his way up to general superintendent. Tough, hard-driving, imaginative, and daring, he was the living image of the hard-hat field engineer. His life was dam-building, and the Wattis-Morrison combination gave him the opportunity to build them; between 1925 and 1931, he built two of the biggest in the West—Guernsey Dam in Wyoming and the Deadwood Dam in Idaho. His big dream, however, was Boulder Dam. In 1919, while still with the Bureau of Reclamation, he had helped to make the first rough surveys of the damsite, and as the concept of such a dam slowly worked its way through the tangle of congressional debate, his eagerness waxed. "I was wild to build this dam," he later recalled. "I had spent my life in the river bottoms, and Boulder meant a wonderful climax—the biggest dam ever built by anyone anywhere." His enthusiasm fired the Wattis brothers, and when the Boulder Dam bill became law, they and Morrison began a campaign to get the construction contract from the government.

For the Wattis brothers, it was an astounding venture. Both were in their seventies and seriously ill (neither would live to see the completion of the dam). But the vision of building "the biggest dam ever built by anyone anywhere" was compelling, and they went after it with determination. Surety companies, who would have to underwrite the project, were expected to demand eight million dollars as a cash guarantee before approval, but Wattis and Morrison were convinced that the figure could be haggled down to a firm five million dollars. The Utah Construction Company put up one million dollars; Morrison-Knudsen added five hundred thousand dollars; and then Morrison went out to get the remaining three million five hundred thousand dollars needed, while Frank Crowe began the enormous task of designing the dam.

The first source of outside capital that Morrison approached was the J. F. Shea Company, Inc., of Los Angeles, tunnel and sewer-line specialists who had secured contracts for laying the water-supply lines of San Francisco, Oakland, and Berkeley. It was run by Charles Shea, a free-wheeling Irishman who operated the business from a room in the Palace Hotel in San Francisco and was reported to have once said, "I wouldn't think of going near a bank unless I owed them at least half a million dollars—you get respect then." Five hundred thousand dollars was what he contributed to the Boulder Dam project, and his long-standing alliance with the Pacific Bridge Company of Portland, Oregon, brought that organization in with another five hundred thousand dollars. Half of the money needed was now in hand, but W. H. Wattis was forced into a hospital bed with cancer of the hip. He knew he would die, and was fearful that his death would leave his brother and the Utah Construction Company hopelessly committed to a speculation that might ruin them both. Harry Morrison's persuasive energies managed to allay the older man's misgivings, and Utah decided to stay.

The next company to add its expertise—and money—to the project was MacDonald and Kahn, Inc., of San Francisco, an unlikely combination of Felix Kahn, a quiet Jew, and Alan MacDonald, an impetuous Scottish engineer who had managed to get himself fired from fifteen consecutive jobs in three years before teaming up with Kahn in 1908. Between them, the pair had put up more than seventy-five million dollars' worth of buildings on the West Coast, including San Francisco's Mark Hopkins Hotel. MacDonald and Kahn contributed one million dollars to the Boulder Dam fund.

While this five-way partnership was being assembled, an independent three-way combination was evolving out of the fervent, imaginative brain of Henry J. Kaiser, who was in Cuba in 1928 finishing up a twenty-million-dollar highway contract for the Cuban government and lying awake nights, scheming of some way to get in on the building of Boulder Dam. That scheming finally involved old-line California contractor W. A. ("Dad") Bechtel, who had worked with Kaiser on several projects. Initially, Bechtel was cautious. "Henry," he replied when Kaiser first proposed the idea, "it sounds a little ambitious." But ambition was one of the driving forces of Kaiser's life-style, and he managed to persuade Bechtel to consult with John Dearborn, chairman of the board of the Boston construction firm of Warren Brothers, who had subcontracted the Cuban job to Kaiser. Dearborn was enthusiastic, and the three men finally entered the Boulder Dam combination as a unit, contributing the remaining one million five hundred thousand dollars needed.

Eastern surety companies remained nervous, dubious that any such loose organization of industrialists could hang together long enough to finish the job and skeptical, after examining the balance sheets of the companies (all were rich, but by eastern standards not resoundingly so), that enough money could be raised; they became more respectful when the Utah Construction Company calmly produced a certified check for one million dollars, and finally accepted the underwriting contract for the five million dollars the combination had raised. In February of 1931, the Six Companies, Inc., was incorporated in Delaware. The next step was the calculation of costs and the submission of a bid to the Bureau of Reclamation, which had called for a deadline of March 4, 1931.

Frank Crowe had constructed a working model of the dam, and for successive days of deliberation it was wheeled into W. H. Wattis' hospital room in Denver as the Six Companies considered in detail every possible cost of the dam. The figure they finally came up with was nearly forty million dollars. An additional 25 percent for contingencies and profit brought the final bid to forty-eight million eight hundred ninety thousand dollars—two days before the deadline. On March 3, Frank Crowe worked up the papers on the bid in his hotel room, and the following day it was submitted to the Bureau of Reclamation. In April the three bids finally submitted were opened in an empty store beneath the Bureau's Washington offices: The Six Companies had won. Their bid was five million dollars under one, ten million dollars under the other, and only twenty-four thousand dollars over the Bureau's own estimates. On April 20, they were given the contract.

The Six Companies had won the right to Boulder Dam; now all they had to do was build it.

"Our first hot argument," Frank Crowe recalled, "was over the organization chart. Kaiser thought the job should be run like an army, with a general in supreme charge. The idea got nowhere because no one, least of all Henry himself, wanted to be a private. . . . Kaiser and Morrison always thought of a job in terms of draglines and steam shovels. Kahn figured in terms of money and an organization chart. But Charlie Shea always thought in terms of men. He was the kind of man who'd ask you the time not because he wanted to know, but to see what kind of watch you carried. They were just about as different as any men could be."

It took three months to weld this disparate group of personalities into a working unit. Kahn wanted a board of directors to run the operation and deal with Crowe, superintendent of construction. Kaiser, of course, wanted a single director. The final compromise was a four-man executive committee. Charlie Shea was in charge of field construction; Felix Kahn looked after the money, legal affairs, and the feeding and housing of the construction crew; Steve Bechtel, "Dad's" second son, was responsible for purchasing, administration, and transportation; and Henry Kaiser in recognition of his unique gift of making men work well together, was made chairman of the group. It was a superbly effective combination.

Six Companies laid out and built Boulder City, with all the refinements necessary for survival in the middle of the Nevada desert—including air conditioning—to house the swarms of depression-hungry laborers who flocked to the damsite for work. Roads for the movement of men and materials were cut through the desert, and the Interior Department authorized a branch line of the Union Pacific Railroad from Las Vegas, Nevada, to the bottom of Black Canyon, where machinery for the first stage of the work could be transferred to barges and floated up to Boulder Canyon.

The first stage was perhaps the most dramatic piece of work in a series of steps whose drama matched that of the Colorado itself: the river had to be turned from its primordial bed and carried around the damsite. The incredible task involved four fifty-foot-diameter diversion tunnels driven through the face of the canyon's walls, two on each side, an inner and an outer tunnel. The outer tunnels would exceed four thousand feet in length, and each would ultimately be equipped with an enormous spillway for controlling the reservoir's level during flood times. The inner tunnels, the eventual basis for the penstock system that would deliver falling water to the hydropower plant at the foot of the dam, were more than three thousand feet in length. Blasting began on May 12, 1931, and eighteen months later—after three nearly disastrous floods, which Frank Crowe feared would "wash us right out of the canyon"—the tunnels were completed. On the evening of November 12, 1932, trucks began dumping rock into the river from a trestle bridge below the point where the river would have to be raised ten feet to flow through the tunnels. For fifteen hours, truckload after truckload—one every fifteen seconds—was dumped into the river, and slowly it began to back up against the barrier. By eleven-thirty the next morning, the river had been raised, a blast of dynamite opened the outer tunnel on the Arizona side, another opened the Nevada tunnel, and the river was turned.

Huge earth-fill coffer dams at each end of the damsite were constructed to wall off the river, and the exposed bed was pumped dry so that digging could commence down to bedrock, one hundred feet below. That point was reached in June of 1933, and the job of raising a dam between the walls of Boulder Canyon began. By this time, the Six Companies had more than three thousand men scrambling around the bottom and walls of the canyon. "The problem," Frank Crowe said, "which was a problem in materials flow, was to set up the right sequence of jobs so they wouldn't kill each other off." The problem also was the sheer bulk of materials involved (including three million two hundred fifty thousand cubic yards of cement, more than three million board-feet of lumber, six hundred sixty-two miles of copper tubing, and an assorted tangle of wires, cables, pipes, and hoses), as well as the staggering complexity of the operation.

The dam was to be 726.4 feet high from its base, 1,244 feet long at the crest, 45 feet thick at the top, and 660 feet thick at the bottom. Had the dam been poured solid, it would have taken 125 years to dry, and the enormous pressures exerted on it by its own bulk would have raised the internal temperatures of the concrete to heights capable of warping and cracking it. It had to be assembled piecemeal, like a gigantic game of children's blocks with individual house-sized forms to take the concrete. There would be 200 such boxes eventually piled together, and each would have a network of copper tubes filled with refrigerant to maintain a steady temperature and consistent drying.

To fill the boxes, the largest concrete plant in the world had been erected on the Nevada side of Black Canyon, half a mile from the damsite. Seventy-five feet by 118 feet in floor size and rising eight stores to the top of its tower, the plant could manufacture 6600 yards of concrete every twenty-four hours—an amount equivalent to a stream twenty feet wide, one foot deep, and a mile in length. From the plant, railroad cars would carry sixteen-ton buckets to the damsite. There overhead cables with skyhooks would pluck them from the cars and swing them out over the

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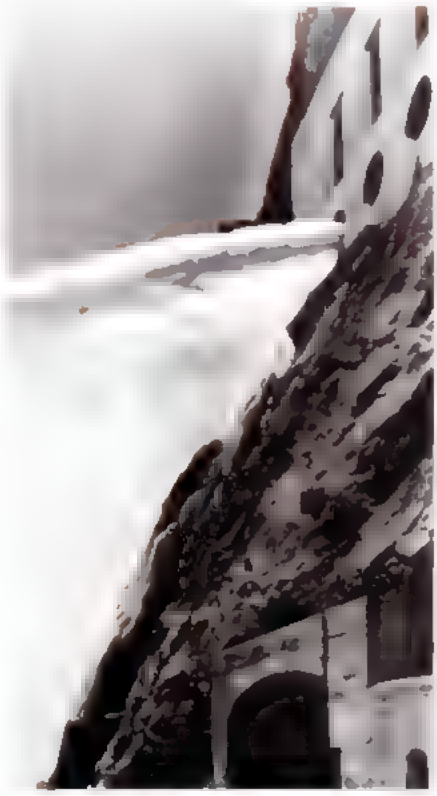

Water jets from the open penstocks of the completed Boulder Dam, which many were calling "the greatest engineering structure of the twentieth century." Others were less inclined to rejoice, including Harper's Theodore White, who earlier had essayed some reflections on the dam and its meaning to the men who were building it: "It is an extraordinary existence out there. All is extreme. The men work with an enforced intensity and play with a hilarious looseness. Their existence is a continual thrill, centered about the callous, cruel lump of concrete at the bottom of the canyon. And they love it. From designing engineer to lowest laborer, they are acutely aware of the immensity and importance of the dam. To them, it assumes a personality and they are devoted to it. . . . In each there is a feeling of ownership, but I think they have never paused to calculate the cost in terms of humanity." Before the great dam was done, 110 men had died.

The Battle of Omaha

In which Law, Order, and Common Decency are Disregarded, the Rights of the People Trampled Under Foot, and Insult Added to Injury.

BY SHARON HRONEK

AMONG THE TRADITIONAL forms of violence in the West, none has been more endemic than the succession of minor wars — some of them downright bloody — over the question of exactly where the territorial, state, or county seat of government should be established. It was, after all, no little question; the community that managed to become the center of regional government could look forward to a future illuminated by prosperity, growth, progress, enterprise, and the guaranteed Good Life. Or so most citizens assumed.

From Austin, Texas, to Hawthorne, Nevada, the nineteenth-century West was consequently marked by a string of militant confrontations between otherwise peace-loving (or at least peace-observing) citizens from rival communities — conflicts annotated by personal vendettas, bloody noses, duels, governmental anarchy, and an absolute sea of journalistic vitriol.

One of the most convulsive of these conflicts took place on Omaha's Capitol Hill more than a century ago. The hill — little more than a gentle rise in the otherwise flatland prairie of eastern Nebraska — had been a community center from the beginning, since it offered one of the few elevated vantage points in that particular corner of the farming frontier. In 1854, celebrants from Kanesville (now Council Bluffs) came across the Missouri River to the hill in order to commemorate the Fourth of July in riotous fashion. In the course of the celebration, two anvils were fired in salute. Hearing the explosion, a band of Indians rode over to investigate, sending the picnickers scrambling back across the river to the safety of Iowa.

As the territory grew, local townships began to campaign to have their corner of Eden selected as the natural habitat of government. The first territorial governor, Francis H. Burt of South Carolina, managed to confuse the issue substantially in 1856 by dying before he could proclaim his selection of the capitol. The citizens of Bellevue, where the governor had died, claimed that he had actually chosen their town for the site. Others, including the people of Omaha, maintained that the governor's last wish had been to see the seat of government established in their communities. Acting Governor Thomas B. Cushing, territorial secretary, finally settled upon Omaha.

The deteriorating Omaha capitol in 1868

The town's first capitol building was a two-story brick affair provided by the Council Bluffs and Nebraska Ferry Company. Even though the building was the only brick structure in a town of log, adobe, sod, and mud houses, the legislature soon moved to a new and incomplete structure on Capitol Hill that more adequately represented the dignity of government: before the building could be finished, four of its columns fell down, lightning struck it, and its colonnade was pronounced unsafe and had to be removed.

The problems of the new capitol were not entirely structural, however; only Omaha had been satisfied with its choice as the governmental seat, and contentious legislators from other parts of the territory began agitating for removal of the capitol almost immediately. During the 1857 session of the legislature, a bill was passed by both houses to relocate the capitol in the "town of Douglas, in the county of Lancaster." Governor Mark W. Izard vetoed the bill, on the grounds that the people had not petitioned for a change, that it was nothing more than the pet idea of a few legislators, and — reasonably enough — that the town of "Douglas" did not yet exist.

The controversy came alive again during the 1858 session. Izard had resigned, and his successor had not yet arrived from Washington; Cushing once again took over as acting governor. On January 6 an act to relocate the capitol was again introduced, based on the premise that the Omaha capitol was illegal because the town had neglected to deed the capitol grounds to the territory. The next day, a deed was delivered to the acting governor — coupled with a demand that the removal bill be withdrawn. Later that day, a committee comprised of the members of the council and the House of the legislature met in the House to consider the bill and the rider that had been attached to the city's deed. The Speaker of the House attempted to gain the committee chairman's chair in order to hear a message from the council, which had adjourned. He was refused, because the rules of the legislature established that no message could be received by one branch when the one that sent it was not in session at that time. The Speaker grabbed the gavel from the committee chairman and tried to boot him out of the chair physically. Legislators sprang to the chairman's defense, and soon the Speaker was sprawled under the table. The melee that followed left bloody noses and black eyes among the legislators.

According to the *Nebraska Advertiser* at the time, it was all Omaha's fault: "On the introduction of the Bill, members of

the House from Douglas county: ex-members; fanatical fire-eating leaders, who heretofore, and do yet govern and control all things of a public nature in and about Omaha, swore on the streets, in the bar rooms, in the lobby, and in the bar of the House, that *'unless that Bill be withdrawn, not another act of any kind should pass during the session!'*—They would *'show the balance of the Territory that the wheels of legislation could and would be blocked up, if they dared further to interfere with this Capitol question!'*—That 'the Capitol *belonged* to Omaha and she would retain it, even though it cost the *heart's blood of Douglas county!*'—That the *'Legislative Halls would be drenched with blood!'*—together with many other such expressions and threats. Such conduct toward the representatives of the people while engaged in their legitimate duties could not fail to excite in the bosom of anyone possessed of the last spark of patriotism feelings of the most indignant scorn, and drove conservative men, who hitherto had cared but little about the simple Capitol question, to take decided and unflinching positions.

"It is not strange nor unexpected that a general 'pitch in,' 'knock down and drag out' should occur among the members. But when outsiders, prominent and wealthy citizens of Omaha, who had been goading continually the Douglas County delegation to acts of violence, rush within the bar, seize the Speaker of the House, hurl him from the stand, and crush him to the floor: then we say law, order, and common decency are disregarded, the rights of the people trampled underfoot, and insult added to injury."

An investigating committee of the legislature later reported, "We are forced to conclude that the action of the majority was unwarranted and revolutionary, without sanction of law or precedent and without pretext or excuse. With a full knowledge of the consequences of their acts they have not only violently broken up the law-making power of the territory, and left the people without redress except at the ballot-box, but they have inaugurated anarchy, destroyed the public peace, trampled upon and disregarded the public interests, and fastened a stigma of disgrace upon a public reputation hitherto unblemished. . . ."

The day after the great battle of Omaha, a motion to adjourn to Florence was passed and carried by the legislature; only the Omaha advocates remained in the building on Capitol Hill. When W. A. Richardson, the new territorial governor, finally arrived, he found the territory being "governed" by two legislatures — one in Florence and one in Omaha. He forthwith declared the Florence legislature illegal and refused to recognize it. It didn't make much difference; both factions adjourned later without having passed a single piece of legislation. Later, the factions did combine long enough to outlaw slavery in the territory.

With the advent of the Civil War, the question of Nebraska's capitol location remained quiescent for the next several years. It was not revived again until 1867, when the legislature appointed Governor David Butler, Secretary of State Thomas P. Kennard, and Auditor John Gillespie as a board of commissioners to relocate the seat of government. With the admission of the territory to the Union that year, the capital was moved to Lincoln on the recommendation of the board, and there it has since remained.

When the capital was moved, the building on the hill was returned to the city of Omaha. The city, with good reason, felt the building was unsafe and razed it to make way for Omaha's first high school in 1872. This building was itself later demolished to make way for yet another building, today's Central High School. Omaha itself, as it turned out, didn't need the capitol to ensure progress: in 1863 it became the eastern terminus of the Union Pacific Railroad; and when the transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869, its future was ordained and guaranteed.

Today, Capitol Hill is a sedate center of learning in the middle of downtown Omaha, dominated by Central High School and the nearby Joslyn Art Museum, whose collections of western and European art have given the city a name and a place in the mainstream of cultural progress—a future surely never dreamed of by the cantankerous legislators who made the hill a scene of fistfights, foul words, and militant anarchy more than a century ago.

Sharon Hronek, *public relations manager of the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha, is a former associate editor of* Nebraska Land.

In 1868, A. J. Russell, official photographer for the Union Pacific Railroad, took these scenes of Omaha as it looked just ten years after the town lost the great battle.

Already, the town showed evidences of the railroad's boost — as shown at the top and opposite (also note Russell's shadow in the scene at right).

OMAHA: 1969

Omaha will be the scene of yet another convocation on October 9-10-11 of this year, when the annual conference of the *Western History Association* meets at the Hotel Fontanelle. Since it is a well-known fact that historians are mild-mannered types, we may expect that no noses will be bloodied. On the other hand . . .

Jornada del Muerto

BY FEROL EGAN

For the '49ers struggling across the treacherous desert wilderness of northern Mexico, the trail to the new Golconda of California was a chain of agony. "We have seen scarcely anything but suffering and death," one diarist noted. In the following article adapted from his forthcoming book, The El Dorado Trail, Ferol Egan narrates the story of a sojourn in Hell.

Around Cape Horn in a ship, or across the narrow waist of Central America and up the Pacific Coast in a ship, or across the plains and mountains in a prairie schooner were the three major ways to get to California during the Gold Rush. But for many others—Mexican War veterans, southerners, southwesterners, and even some easterners and midwesterners—the trail to El Dorado was through Mexico. They sailed across the Gulf of Mexico from Mobile, from New Orleans, and from Havana, Cuba. Their ports of call were the wind-swept, barren Texas harbors at Galveston, Port Lavaca, Corpus Christi, and Brazos Santiago on the northern curve of the Gulf shore. South from these ports, the principal starting points for the Mexico crossing were Tampico and Vera Cruz. From these two points, the goldseekers crossed the great midsection of Mexico for the western ports of Mazatlán, San Blas, or Acapulco, and from there by ship to California.

Some Argonauts who departed from Texas seaports also headed for Mazatlán, but most of the men who crossed the Río Grande struck out into the vast, semi-arid plateau for that pinpoint on the map called Chihuahua City and the northern overland route across the dry land. They followed the desert trail toward the mythical Seven Cities of Cíbola that Coronado had searched for and headed west to the real El Dorado. These questers of their own golden dream crossed the Río Grande anywhere between Matamoros and El Paso del Norte. They crossed the great river of the north, traveled in the territory of the Comanche and Apache, crossed the Sierra Madre Occidental just south of Arizona, and dragged themselves across the Great American Desert. Somewhere to the northwest was California. Somewhere beyond the range of suffering and death was El Dorado.

After it was all over, after the suffering and the cries of the dying, he was able to write about it with some objectivity. He even knew that his real reason for going, for enduring the long march through the deadly land was not so much for gold as it was for "the same wild feeling that sent thousands . . . straggling across the lonely prairies, or beating windward against the eternal westerly seas around Cape Horn." Unlike most seekers of El Dorado, John Woodhouse Audubon was a trained observer, a man quite capable of analyzing his own motivations, and it was his long ap-

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The Mexican Journey: Most of the goldseekers in this account crossed the Rio Grande into Mexico at Brownsville, traveling directly west to Parras, then northwest to Santa Cruz, Chihuahua City, and Janos. Crossing through Guadalupe Pass to San Bernardino, they then turned north to Tucson and the Pima and Maricopa Indian villages on the banks of the Gila, then west along the river to its confluence with the Colorado.

prenticeship under his father's guidance that had provided him with the necessary tools

At the beginning of 1849, John Woodhouse Audubon had more reasons to remain home than to join the Gold Rush. He was thirty-six years old, slender, and tall; a handsome, alert, and active man, sensitive to everything about him; a man who moved with ease and grace in all classes of society. He might well have been taken for a social dandy. But above all these characteristics, he possessed a fine artistic talent that was coming into its own. In every sense of the word, he had become "established," well prepared to assume the role of successor to his famous father.

It was even less plausible for John to go trooping off on a wild expedition to California since his father was very ill and was no longer able to work. The elder Audubon's health had steadily deteriorated since the loss of most of his eyesight in 1846. At that time, he had asked his son to finish the paintings for his book on North America's quadrupeds. Now as John got ready for a trip his father would have jumped at not many years before, the old man was hardly aware of what was happening. Ironically, as John made his final plans, his senile father's greatest joy was to have John's sister-in-law "sing a Spanish song, **Buenas Noches,** every night before he went to bed."

Despite his father's failing health, John Woodhouse Audubon could not resist the expedition formed by friends of the family and placed under the command of Colonel Henry L. Webb, who had commanded a regiment during the Mexican War. The call of adventure was simply too powerful — and his own father had given him reason enough when he said only three years before the discovery of gold in California, "Push on to the West, even to California, you will find new animals at every change in the formation of the country, and new birds from Central America will delight you." Using the gold as an excuse, Audubon accepted a position as second in command under Colonel Webb. On February 8, 1849, the company of eighty men, with a capital of $27,000, boarded the steamship **Transport** and set sail from New York to Philadelphia. They were headed for Brazos Santiago and Brownsville, Texas. From there they planned to take what they thought would be an early and easy route across northern Mexico to the Gila Trail and on to California.

Ten days before Colonel Webb's California Company said farewell to the States, the Hampden Mining Company of Westfield, Massachusetts, had boarded a schooner and set sail for Brazos Santiago. Both companies traveled in the quasi-military fashion of the times. No doubt, the tendency to follow the movements of a military unit was due in part to the caution of veterans of the Mexican War. But it was also because some of the organizers of these groups realized it would be necessary if not vital to have a disciplined body of men in order to cut down the risks of the tough journey ahead. Another similarity between the Hampden Mining Company and Audubon's group—as well as most others during the Gold Rush—was the presence of at least one man who kept a diary of the trip.

The forty-six members of the Hampden Mining Company arrived at the stark, windy, and sandy frontier outpost of Brazos Santiago on February 20, 1849. To A. B. Clarke, diarist for the Hampden group, Brazos Santiago was a military station on a sand bank. It consisted of a military building, a collection of rundown shanties, and an "old steamboat . . . hauled up on the sand . . . and used for a hotel, post-office, &c." The rest of the company must have shared his feeling about the place, for by three that afternoon they had secured passage on a military vessel bound for Brownsville.

The Hampden Company's attitude toward Brazos Santiago seemed to be universal. When Audubon first saw the town from aboard ship, he wrote that "not a landmark more than ten feet was in sight, and miles and miles of breakers, coming and dashing on the glaring beach, broken here and there by the dark, weather-stained wrecks of unfortunate vessels . . . ended our view whichever way we looked. . . "

The scenery did not much improve, according to Clarke, as the Hampden party moved up the Río Grande to Brownsville. Here they stopped long enough to cross over to Matamoros, where they called on the American consul and obtained passports for their company, each man paying two dollars to the consul for a certificate and one dollar to the Mexican **alcalde**. While they were in Matamoros, Clarke looked over the town. He noted it contained about ten thousand people and had "more the appearance of a large brick-kiln, ready for burning, than anything else."

The lonely beach at Brazos Santiago and the brick-kiln façade of Matamoros were not the only jumping off places for gold miners taking the northern route across Mexico. Some parties started from interior Texas towns and crossed the Río Grande to the northwest, still other miners began their trek from Texas ports on the eastern curve of the Gulf of Mexico. Young Harvey Wood was a member of such a party.

Harvey Wood was twenty-one years old and working as a clerk in a New Jersey store when he got gold fever. He had been reading ads in the **New York Tribune** placed by a flim-flam man named Hough who had chosen a most adventurous name for his overland company: the Kit Carson Association (though the great mountain man and scout had no connection with it). On February 6, 1849, this company had placed an ad in the local newspaper that had a ring of great urgency about it, a sort of last call for California gold:

FOR CALIFORNIA VIA TEXAS, — Starting positively for Galveston on the 12th inst. in the fine packet ship **William B. Travis.** We get ourselves (all expenses paid) two mules (valuable in mining as men) and three months provision each to California early in May for $110 per man. Full particulars by D. Hough, Jr., 1 Front st. President of the Carson Association.

Hough knew how to merchandise a dream. As Harvey Wood wrote many years later, Hough told them he was going to be their guide and would get them through in tiptop shape. Before the ship had reached the open sea, however, the members of the Kit Carson Association discovered that their mentor was no longer with them. All fifty-three of these gold-hungry greenhorns were strictly on their own.

Fifteen days later, on the last day of February, 1849, the Kit Carson Association landed at Galveston, Texas. Wood does not describe Galveston, but George Evans of the Defiance Gold Hunter's Expedition, who passed through the town just ten days later, considered Galveston to be the best-looking place he had seen since leaving Defiance, Ohio. He was greatly taken with the city's "large squares and wide streets . . . and palmetto trees." He was one of the few who saw much in the way of beauty, however; another diarist noted that the town was "not in a flourishing state" and that many of the houses were closed and without tenants.

Whether gold miners liked Galveston, Brazos Santiago, Brownsville, or any of the other Texas ports, really did not matter. All were merely places to land at and to leave from—places at which to get gear together, buy horses and mules, check with local men who might know something about the trails ahead, pick up provisions, and get rid of worthless baggage before beginning the long trek.

Wood's journal makes it quite clear that the greenhorns of the Kit Carson Association bought their share of gimmicks for the

quick and easy removal of gold dust Among the worthless items they purchased was a monumental five-story gold washer consisting of five sets of sieves. Not only was this magnificent machine without value, it was almost impossible to carry overland. Yet the ever brave Kit Carson Association did not have the common sense to leave the monster at Galveston but hauled it to Corpus Christi and on to Laredo, where they were finally forced to abandon it No member of the party was superstitious enough to consider the machine a jinx, but along the silt-heavy Rio Grande some of the men came down with Asiatic cholera, and one young man died far from his Pennsylvania home and his golden dream.

The Kit Carson Association buried their comrade at Laredo and then hurried across the muddy Rio Grande, but Audubon and Colonel Webb's California Company were not to be spared so easily. They had passed through Brownsville without stopping and then boarded the steamer **Corvette** bound upriver for Rio Grande City. Their first difficulty came as the **Corvette** cruised upstream. The Captain had a great deal of trouble finding enough deep water to keep her afloat, and the boat was often hung up on sand bars. When this happened, it took a considerable effort to maneuver the vessel off and get her back into something that resembled a channel. For Audubon, however, such delays provided time to observe the many kinds of birds and to collect some specimens. Finally, when the **Corvette** reached Rio Grande City, the company filed ashore and set up camp according to Colonel Webb's strict military rules, which were eventually to be their undoing.

As night came on, Audubon was "lulled by the mellow notes of the chick-wills-widow, and the drone of myriads of insects." He lay on his blankets in the warm evening, said a short prayer for continued health for himself and his family, and drifted off to sleep in the quiet night. It was to be the last peaceful evening he would know for many weeks, for twenty-four hours later a member of their party was stricken with cholera.

John Booth Lambert, a young lawyer from Connecticut, became violently ill. He groaned and pulled his knees toward his chin as severe stomach cramps hit. He vomited in uncontrollable spasms and alternated between high fever and chills. All night he drifted in and out of fire and ice, in and out of reality and illusion. By morning he appeared to be improving, and Audubon thought he might make it. Then without a scream, a groan, or a last word, he was dead

The company of men became panic-stricken. They knew very little about the cause or cure of the disease, but they all knew its horror, for between its first appearance in the United States in 1832 and 1840, cholera had killed 4,500 persons in New York City alone. Camping in true military style, as though expecting an invasion, their tents in a straight line despite mud or dry sand, Colonel Webb's California Company was wide open for the spread of this highly contagious disease. The very next night another member of the company came down with it. This time it was Hamilton Boden, an extremely strong young man. Audubon hoped that he would be able to withstand the onslaught, but by morning the combination of fever and chills, of spasmodic retching and defecation had taken its toll. The constant retching had ruptured the veins in Boden's face, and his "broad forehead was marked with blue and purple streaks of blood that stood under the skin and down both sides of the nose, stagnating in the delicate veins round the mouth and the large arteries of the neck. . . ." As Boden lay dying, the fever began to run wild throughout the company. Three men grabbed at their guts and fell to the ground, twisted and contorted with pain as the first wave of cramps hit.

Audubon and Webb made frantic preparations to get the party out of Rio Grande City. They hoped that by moving upstream to Roma, Texas, they might outrun the disease, not knowing they would be simply carrying the highly infectious killer with them. Then, to compound their trouble, another disaster hit. Audubon had left the bulk of the party's money with the bartender at the Armstrong Hotel, as this appeared to be the safest thing he could do. But when he returned for the money, he was told that two other members of the party—Hughes and White—had already picked it up and vanished.

Audubon offered a reward for the recovery of the stolen money, and two Texas rangers took on the assignment. They tracked Hughes and White and near Camargo, Mexico, caught Hughes. They tied him to a tree "far off in the chaparral, where no cry for help could be heard," and tried to encourage him to tell where he and White had hidden the money. Hughes didn't talk, and the rangers brought his skull back to the barroom at the Armstrong Hotel, where it became a grisly trophy. As for White, the rangers caught up with him near San Antonio and shot him as he tried to escape. Apparently the rangers got some information out of White, as they located about two-thirds of the stolen money. While this was better than nothing, the ultimate cost of staying another week in cholera-stricken Rio Grande City resulted in the burying of eight more companions.

While the shattered company of men under Colonel Webb headed upstream toward Roma, more and more gold miners were landing in Texas ports and heading up the Rio Grande or cutting directly west towards El Paso del Norte. Through rumors, newspaper stories, government reports, and guidebooks, these emigrant parties had learned something about the trails across the northern desert of Mexico, but what they had not learned were the details of these crossings. Few knew of the very real possibilities of dying of thirst, of having one's scalp lifted by Apaches, or of getting lost in the Sierra Madre and wandering in a maze of **barrancas** until turkey buzzards laid claim to their bodies. Yet even if the men had known all these problems, even if they had realized all the risks, most of them would have continued

Their willingness to believe information without questioning its reliability, without doubting that they would be safe, was remarkable. The men who made up these parties really believed that they were off on a kind of outing to a land where gold nuggets would be scattered over the ground. The pull of this golden lure and the chance for adventure was more than most men could resist

John E. Durivage was no exception. Formerly a war correspondent during the Mexican War, and an outstanding reporter for the New Orleans **Daily Picayune,** this gentleman was thoroughly stricken with the gold mania. Like Audubon, however, Durivage was driven by more than the pursuit of gold. Adventure called him, and he was also attracted by the challenge to report the lemming-like movement of men.

Landing at Brazos Santiago during the first week of March, 1849, Durivage and his party immediately headed up the Rio Grande to Brownsville, where he observed the devastating effect of cholera. In a letter to his newspaper, he wrote that about one hundred persons in a town of fifteen hundred had already died. When he reached Rio Grande City, he wrote that it was "nearly deserted, the cholera having appeared and frightened the inhabitants from the place."

As he moved up the Rio Grande, Durivage saw more and more emigrant parties Men were on the move from Georgia, St Louis, New Orleans, and more places than

he took time to list. It was as though all the young men in the States had left the safety of their homes and were on the move to the goldfields. Durivage reported that a vast number were also taking the Chihuahua City–Gila River route But all the joy, all the thrill of questing, was fast disappearing as cholera took more and more lives. By the time Durivage reached Camargo, Mexico, on his way to Saltillo, he wrote, "We have seen scarcely anything but suffering and death "

The Webb-Audubon party, stalked by suffering and death, fell way behind the other parties of emigrants. They straggled into Mier on April 25, it had taken them over a month to travel the thirty miles from Rio Grande C ty. By this time Audubon and Webb had come down with cholera, too Both were slowly recovering, but Webb was not able to continue the march. Audubon took over as leader of the party and decided to sell all but one of the party's broken-down wagons because the roads and trails ahead were going to be much rougher than those they had already traveled. This decision also meant they had to cut down on their supplies It now became necessary to select carefully only those items that could be carried by pack horses and mules

Leaving Mier on April 28, the Audubon Company was able to move at a swifter pace, due to Audubon's leadership, a respite from cholera, and the transformation of the party from a wagon train to a pack train By May 8 they were camped at Walnut Springs, five miles outside Ciudad Monterrey. They were tired, but they were moving forward at long last, for in their ten-day trip from Mier they had averaged about ten miles per day. Resting in the shade of Spanish walnut trees, they relaxed and enjoyed this camp where a spring shot out in a fountain and provided the luxury of unlimited water

This was Audubon's first and only time is Monterrey. Like other Americans he had heard about this area as a result of the Mexican War; yet he wrote very little about the city, for his new position of captain was foremost in his thoughts. His men were weary and worn and not yet broken in for the long trek facing them. Their spirits were low, for they could not forget the death of their companions, nor the wild fear that had sent others in a frantic, homeward retreat. Though they were not totally demoralized, they had wa ked the ragged edge of daily despair, and their faces showed it. Now when they needed rest, when they needed recovery time, they had to move as qu ckly as they could They were already far behind the pace they needed to maintain if they were going to get through the northern deserts before the deadly summer heat arrived. The pressure was on, and even the hope of a good night's sleep was gone as each man had to take his turn at guard duty Audubon, too, felt the strain of having to stand guard, of constantly having to watch for thieves. "At midnight," he wrote, "I take the rounds of our camp in moonlight, starlight or darkness. . . . This gives me only six hours of sleep

Six hours of sleep or none, the party had to move on. They encountered their next disaster as they camped outs de the city of Saltillo. In this "safe" camp as the men slept —beyond the specter of cholera—a man on guard duty lost his grip on his rifle, and it went off as it struck the ground. This single shot in the night in a strange country "created a breathless silence, even with the bravest. . . ." The men waited silently for more shooting, but there was only the single shot. They heard someone groaning. One member of the company voiced the deepest fears of the group when he whispered, "My God, Mr. Audubon's killed!" In seconds the camp became a scene of wild confusion. Relief, coupled with concern for the wounded man, came finally with the discovery that a young man named Graham had been shot

Audubon was the first to get to Graham and saw that the rifle ball had passed through his ankle. As he assisted the company's two doctors—Trask and Perry—w'th the wounded man, his ears were still ringing from the sound of the whirring ball, which had narrowly missed his head. A council was held, and it was decided to leave Graham and his cousin in Saltillo until he was well enough to travel again Audubon gave the two men as much money as could be spared from the company's dw n-dling funds to help them survive until they could rejoin the party

Hoping that the accidental shooting of Graham was the last of their troubles, the Audubon party left the plains around Saltillo and the battlefield of Buena Vista and headed west into the dry hills of the Sierra Madre. As they reached the top of the range, where they hoped the trail would lead them onto a grassy plain, the deadly land tricked them once again. They had reached a broad plain that seemed to go on into space. It was like being at the bottom of a sea without any water. Mile after endless mile there was no sign of water, no sign of life. No matter which direction the men looked, they saw no lean-ribbed cattle, no burros, no used-up horses walking along in search of a clump of grass to nibble This was a dead land. Nowhere in this flat, dry Bolsón de Parras, this ancient lake bed left over from another climate, was there any

While Audubon's agonizing trek across the mountains and deserts of Mexico left him little time to pursue art, he did find opportunity enough to make hurried pencil and watercolor sketches. Night watch on the trail was one of the most onerous of duties, for even in the summer months the high desert plains of north central Mexico took on a bitter chill—as illustrated by this scene, sketched at two o'clock in the morning of July 11. Audubon planned to render most of his quick drawings into finished paintings when he found time, and many contained penciled notes to himself regarding place, time, colors, and terrain.

At right, Audubon sketched a small adobe hacienda and its outbuildings somewhere on "the grand table between the two great ridges of the Cordilleras," on July 9, 1849, and did a quick drawing of the hacienda's plan (bottom left) as well as one of his own camp's layout (right).

sign of life or water. Yet not many miles from their first view of the desolate **bolsón,** Audubon's party entered a **rincon** hidden in the desert mountains. Suddenly there was water. And with water, there was life. Ahead of the weary emigrants was the long, narrow valley of Parras.

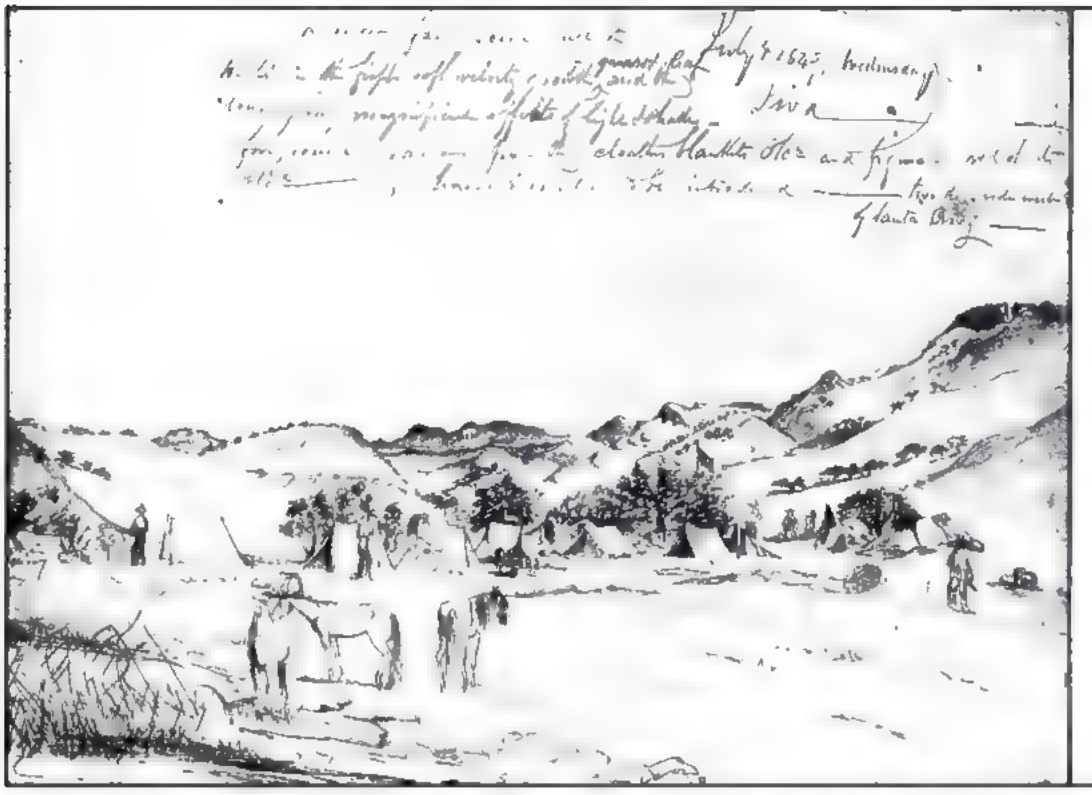
Parras in the state of Coahuila was an oasis, a place of decision for travelers on the El Dorado Trail. Here, next to running water, in the shade of tall cottonwood trees, they camped and rested. They got out their maps and guidebooks. They talked to local citizens and to foreigners who had settled in this place. They talked of Mexico, of the country they had wandered through, of the wines and brandy that Parras was famous for, and of the one central issue that drove them onward. Where, they asked, is the road to California?

A key question at Parras got a key answer. Which one? Which road? Which trail? To the west across Mexico's central plateau was Durango and the silver mines. Beyond Durango was the winding mule trail across the Sierra Madre Occidental to the port of Mazatlán. Here a man might catch a ship to San Francisco. Another way to California was to cross the Bolsón de Parras, the Bolsón de Mapimi, and head northwest to Chihuahua City. From Chihuahua City was the road to Janos in the northern foothills of the Sierra Madre. Beyond that was a trail through the Guadalupe Pass to the state of Sonora. Then to the north was Tucson and west of there was the junction of the Gila and Colorado rivers, the Colorado Desert, and then California.

Many of the California emigrant companies that passed through Parras failed to describe it in detail, but all of them stayed for a few days before striking out into the great Central Plateau. Most of the companies came away with some bottles of Parras brandy and wine. Durivage even left Parras with a Negro boy he hired as a servant—a boy "whose wardrobe consisted of a very melancholy-looking pair of leather breeches, a forlorn hat, a sickly shirt, and distressing shoes."

To Audubon, Parras was a town of one-story adobe houses, the color of campfire ashes, but it was also a place where "one might almost fancy himself again in a country where it rains sometimes, and be almost tempted to believe that after all, there is something worth living for in this burnt up region." But Audubon's luck had not changed. Once again his company was hit by cholera. This time Audubon suffered another attack of fever serious enough for the company to have to carry him in their remaining wagon as they left Parras on the morning of June 2 and headed into the dry heat of the Bolsón de Parras. Unlike most goldseekers, they were not bound for either Durango or Chihuahua City. They were on their way to Parral, a silver-mining town in the foothills of the Sierra Madre north of Durango and south of Chihuahua City. Here they planned to take a trail across the mountains into the state of Sonora and then north to the confluence of the Gila and Colorado rivers. Their journey would be different from those of most, but it crossed the same endless, barren land of northern Mexico. Audubon and most of his men would make it to California—but, like those who traveled the "standard" routes, not without a season in hell.

By this time other companies of California emigrants were well on their way to Chihuahua city, Durango, and El Paso del Norte. Of these, Chihuahua City was perhaps the most "popular." All roads, all trails, all paths leading to Chihuahua City made men more than happy to arrive in this "City of the North." Men trekking from Parras came through the lunar landscape of the Bolsón de Parras; or they left the dry, dusty, ancient lake bed and headed northwest across the semi-arid land of the Bolsón de Mapimí. Emigrant companies traveling from San Antonio and Laredo had to climb the dry, rugged ridges of the Sierra Madre Oriental without benefit of a true path, only to wander on to the Bolsón de Mapimí. Men crossing the Río Grande farther north at Presidio del Norte had to make a semicircle around the Big Bend



Like most of the '49ers, Audubon's party paused long enough to commemorate as best it could the Fourth of July. The "most fairy scene" at left shows their Independence Day Camp "two days' ride west of Santa Cruz." The half-drawn figure at the bottom of the picture illustrates how many members of the exhausted party decided to celebrate the Glorious Fourth —by sleeping.

country and then headed into the Bolsón de Mapimí. And the emigrants who forded the river at El Paso del Norte had the choice of making a wide detour through rugged, dry foothills where Indians waited or trudging through **Los Médanos** — incredible rolling sandhills that stretched for miles like a series of lost beaches in need of an ocean.

These were the ways to Chihuahua City, and they offered no easy going. They offered no rich cities either, not even decent little villages. There were only poor **poblados,** crumbling **haciendas,** and undermanned military posts waiting for the final Indian raid. Nowhere in this vast country could a traveling emigrant expect to buy much food, for people living within the specter of starvation were not merchants by nature. Nowhere in this country where seasonal grass was awaited by all animals could a man expect to find good grazing land for his livestock, unless he arrived just as the season started. Nowhere in this high plateau of little rain and fast runoffs could a man always expect to find water. The ways to the "City of the North" were not designed for the weak, the sick, or the cowardly. The ways to Chihuahua City truly tested a man's desire to get there and challenged his willingness to make the long **jornada.**

The Hampden Mining Company arrived in Chihuahua City on April 15, 1849. They had made remarkable time — about five hundred miles in eighteen days. They were lucky, and they knew it. There had been plenty of water, grass, and food in the **poblados;** and they had had no trouble with Indians. Their timing had been just right, and their selection of the trail had been like drawing to an inside straight.

Two days out of Parras they had stopped at the village of San Lorenzo and purchased loaves of fresh, hot bread the women were taking out of small adobe ovens. When they rode away from San Lorenzo, their guide got lost, but just at dusk they met a party of mounted and well-armed Mexicans who directed them to the public road. Nowhere were they molested by Indians, although all along their route were crosses in memory of less fortunate travelers, and the whole country was terrified of more raids.

Clarke's company felt as all others did about Chihuahua City when they arrived there. Here a man had a sense of security in the middle of nowhere. Here he could forget where he had been and where he had to go. Here he could rest, sleep in a hotel, eat a decent meal, buy a drink, meet women, buy supplies, ask about the trail, forget about Indians, visit a church (even though it was Catholic), and get ready for the long drag ahead.

When the Kit Carson Association arrived in the city on May 1, Harvey Wood wrote that they attended church on Sunday morning and a bullfight in the afternoon. After a week's layover, they "bid goodbye to Chihuahua, starting out with our animals feeling much better and with more experience in packing a mule." John Durivage also arrived in Chihuahua City on May 1 and stayed at a hotel owned by an American named Riddle. Durivage thought the accommodations excellent for a man and his horse. The price of board," he wrote, "is $1.50 per day and 37½c for each animal."

The beauty of the city, the abundance of food and water, the different types of people, the local customs — all were memories that California emigrants had of the "City of the North." Yet one image held them the most, one memory left the deepest impression — the Cathedral of Chihuahua. In spite of the anti-Catholic bias of most miners, a bias that came out in their journal entries about the "priest-ridden" country, the miners were overwhelmed by the church's grandeur. It didn't take a religious man to realize that this monument to Catholicism was also a monument to man's ability to endure and to create beauty in a land that offered in exchange only a daily challenge of hostility and brutality, a daily threat of death.

Outside the limits of Chihuahua City the California emigrants wasted no time as they headed north. The way to Janos, the last frontier outpost before the Guadalupe Pass, was across a tawny land overlooked by barren desert mountains, where dry arroyos

(Continued on page 61)

nome:

Be it ever so humble, there was no place quite like it in the annals of the Gold Rush West.

BY WILLIAM BRONSON

There was no place called Nome, Alaska, until 1898, when coarse gold was found in the sands of the Snake River. It may be possible to imagine a more unlikely setting for a frontier mining town, or for that matter, a town of any kind, but I can't think where. Perhaps there is such a place in Antarctica.

Perched at the edge of the ruler-straight southwest coast of the Seward Peninsula, on the treeless, frozen tundra which characterizes that bleak arm of America, Nome is a city unique. There is no harbor at Nome; indeed, the Bering Sea along this stretch is frozen solid for seven months of the year. During the long winter, the only way to get to Nome is by plane or dogsled. Poor transportation, little food production, no timber, no oil, no waterpower, no recreational potential—this is Nome today, cold and remote.

Yet an aura of romance is linked with the name: Nome was a great American gold rush town, and was the last of its kind.

The first known photograph (early 1899) of what was to become Nome City.

Below, a dogteam—the only means of travel during the seven-month winter—sets up a picturesque howl.

IT WAS IN JULY of 1898 that the first promise of wealth was panned from placers near Nome. Summer had brought the first sizeable numbers of prospectors into the region, most of them disappointed stampeders from the Klondike. Before, perhaps eight hundred Eskimos and a handful of squaw men were the only people living on the whole Seward Peninsula

In September of 1898, the first major strikes were made by three Scandinavian prospectors who staked claims on Anvil and Glacier creeks, tributaries of the Snake upstream from the future site of Nome, and in Snow Gulch, a branch of Glacier Creek. These claims were to

make millionaires of the discoverers, Eric Lindblom, John Brinterton and Jafet Linderberg

The news spread through the region and the rush was on. In the first weeks, early arrivals not only staked claims for themselves but, in a flagrant abuse of mining tradition, used the power of attorney to stake claims for family and friends. Some men staked as many as thirty claims, and according to the U.S. Geological Survey report on the Nome fields, forty men had tied up seven thousand acres of the richest land in the region before winter came. Thousands of Americans who arrived later raised hell, but nothing could be done about it.

Winter, which comes to Nome in October, closed in before much gold was washed from the claims. The $2,000 taken from Anvil Creek and Snow Gulch

In winter the Bering Sea froze solid for miles, and during the spring breakup enormous chunks of ice cluttered the surf of Nome's exposed waterfront.

was but a tantalizing hint of what the next year would bring. When winter ended in June of 1899, thousands were on the scene or on their way. But it wasn't until the chance finding of gold in the sands of the beach in late July that the Nome rush became full blown. When word of the beach discovery reached the great Yukon boomtown of Dawson, it marked the end of the Klondike rush. In one month two thousand men and women left Dawson for the new strike.

The beach at Nome and beyond, a dozen miles or so to the west, proved to be the richest tidewater diggings ever known. And the magic of it all was that anyone with a shovel and a rocker could work the sands to his heart's content. The commandant in charge of the small detachment of troops dispatched to Nome ruled that under federal law no claims could be staked on the beach beyond a point sixty feet above the high-tide mark. Good feelings abounded, and there was little friction or trouble.

Before the summer of 1899 ended, the population had grown to about seven thousand and another three thousand men were blazing trails across the Seward Peninsula in search of new bonanzas. Predictions were made that the next year would bring thirty thousand. In a short article in the February, 1900, issue of *Scientific American*, an excited reporter predicted that ". . . the summer of 1900 will witness the most gigantic flight of myriads of people that the world has ever known toward these mines."

ON A GIVEN DAY that year until winter closed in, in October, anywhere from a thousand to twenty-five hundred could be found working the beach sands. The process was simple. Each man, or woman for that matter, took a small plot—perhaps ten by fifteen feet—and dug down two to five feet to the color-bearing streaks. The gold in the beach diggings was exceedingly fine, and mixed with ruby sands just above the heavily compacted clays which the miners called bedrock. The pay-streak sands were then shoveled or ladled into the rockers and washed through with water dipped from the bottom of the hole, from the surf, or from rivulets which poured at intervals off the tundra bordering the beach. The fine gold was trapped at the base of the rocker either on a piece of blanket or on copper sheets coated with mercury. Since copper was in short supply in 1899, some of the rocker bottoms were lined with silver dollars to hold the mercury. If the miner used the first method, he merely had to wash the blanket in a tub of water to collect the trapped gold. If he used mercury, which formed an amalgam with the gold, he first squeezed the amalgam through a piece of chamois skin to recover as much mercury as possible, then roasted what

Until the airplane became a mainstay of Alaskan transportation, all bulk cargo (as well as most seagoing passengers) had to be lightered into Nome on barges.

was left, generally in an ordinary frying pan, to drive off the remaining mercury.

As thousands worked the beach, other thousands were busy building Nome and consolidating the rich inland claims so that large-scale placer techniques could be used. The beach diggings remained a "poor man's proposition" as long as the gold lasted, but it took capital, and lots of it, to tear the gold from the gravels of the tundra.

Winter in the arctic is long and harsh. From late October to early April temperatures rarely rise above freezing. The lashing blizzards begin arriving in November, and readings close to fifty below are not unknown.

About twenty-five hundred stayed in the new city through the winter of 1899-1900, and when the shore finally became ice-free in June, the expected avalanche of gold-seekers from the "outside" began arriving. But the "gigantic flight of myriads of people" never materialized. At the height of the 1900 season, the population reached about eighteen thousand. And many of these were soured to learn that the beach sands, which had drawn them there in the first place, had been rather well worked over by the pioneers of 1899.

Even so, there was plenty of work. A carpenter could command $1.50 or more an hour, a teamster $2.00, and a man with team and wagon, $10.00. Prices were high, perhaps twice San Francisco prices for staples, but wages too were much higher than those that prevailed in the States.

As in all gold rush boomtowns, there were plenty of ways to part with your money. Gambling, saloons, and dance halls were as much a fixture as they were in Dawson, but Nome was no Dawson in the eyes of those who knew them both. Arthur Treadwell Walden, who spent five years in the north and years later wrote *A Dog Puncher on the Yukon* said that Nome ". . . never compared in my estimation with Dawson in its palmy days."

Nome was full of toughs, and in the absence of any force like Dawson's Northwest Mounted Police, crime was rampant. In his book Walden wrote of the town as he saw it in 1900:

> Robbery of every description was in full swing at Nome, from the highest officials down to the lowest scum. . . . The men down here seemed to be more quarrelsome than they were in Dawson [in fact almost as bad as they were in Skagway when it was controlled by the infamous

Soupy Smith], and robbing and stealing were so prevalent that nothing was safe. At one time it was proved here that all the sheriffs and deputy sheriffs had done time in the penitentiary. One of them made his living by robbing the drunks he arrested.

One day two men and I were given a dose of knock-out drops. The three of us had been doped together, and as we had had a drink in three different saloons, it was impossible to tell which one had done the trick. Two of us were already busted and lost nothing, but the other man was robbed of six hundred dollars.

In July, 1899, an unknown prospector discovered that fine gold could be washed out of the sands of Nome's beaches by any man (or woman). It was a "poor man's proposition," requiring nothing more than simple equipment, time, and a strong back.

SIDE FROM the establishment of a few scattered military posts and customs stations and a handful of often corrupt officials sent from the States, Alaska was largely left to govern itself until enactment of the Alaska Act of 1900, which, among other things, created three judicial districts, one to be based in Nome. It was hoped that law and order, perhaps even justice, would follow, but this was not to be the case. When Judge Arthur H. Noyes arrived on July 19, 1900, his mind was on personal enrichment—not on the fate of the five accused murderers who had been held for his arrival. Noyes was a thief, as was his traveling companion, Alexander McKenzie.

Both were originally from North Dakota, where McKenzie had flourished as a political boss. Rex Beach said of McKenzie that he was ". . . not the common municipal vote getter, the manipulator of primaries, but the man of riches, respectability and standing, who plays the game for gold not glory." And Beach described Noyes as a "plastic tool" of McKenzie.

The "general sordidness" of Nome, as Walden characterized it, grew under the reign of the corrupt Judge Noyes. As soon as he and McKenzie stepped off the boat, they set about stealing the richest mines of the region. The scheme was as simple as it was audacious: McKenzie had formed the Alaskan Gold Mining Company, capitalized it at fifteen million dollars, and gave shares liberally to his politically influential acquaintances, including a number of United States senators. The latter, smelling gold, induced President McKinley to appoint McKenzie's crooked pal Noyes to the northwest Alaskan judicial district.

Soon after their arrival in Nome, Mc-

Nome beaches were soon washed clean of gold by a small army of stampeders, but this last of the great free placer diggings remained long enough for the photographer to capture a scene that had long before become a cliche in the mining West—the "Girl Wanted" photograph on the left.

Nome City had been built like any other frontier boomtown, with little regard for the realities of geography or climate. During winter, the snow drifted into great piles in the narrow streets, and burrowing became a way of life. In the brief spring and summer, however, the rich tundra would yield almost anything that would grow, and for a time life could be reasonably comfortable. That it was more often desolate is eloquently suggested by the photograph below. The prospector is surrounded by everything in his life that has meaning to him—his tiny house, his tools, and his dogs (worth a small fortune in a country dependent upon them, but to this man obviously not for sale). The hardship of his existence is etched in a face that is old far beyond his years. . . .

Kenzie drew up the papers necessary to have the Alaskan Gold Mining Company named receiver of a number of rich claims on Anvil Creek, most of which had been purchased by the Wild Goose and Pioneer mining companies from the original stakers. With Noyes' signature on the documents, he set forth with a band of hired bullies and physically ejected the legal owners of five of the claims—*all in less than twenty-four hours* from the time he first stepped ashore.

Claim-jumping is part of the history of American mining, but the McKenzie–Noyes conspiracy must be considered the ultimate incident in the annals of this crime.

When the miners protested bitterly that they hadn't been notified in advance of the seizures nor given a chance to be heard at the time of McKenzie's appointment as receiver, Noyes refused to hear their appeals. It didn't take them long to realize that redress would have to come from the outside, if it were to come at all, so they dispatched representatives to San Francisco by steamer with copies of the court records.

The U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, Ninth District, reviewed the matter and quickly issued a writ directing McKenzie to cease operations and return the properties to the rightful owners. When the writ arrived in Nome on September 19, McKenzie flatly refused to obey the orders. Noyes as flatly refused to order him to, although it was clearly his duty. Indeed, he even commanded the federal troops under his authority to fend off any attempts the miners might make to take back their claims.

The miners once again sent men to San Francisco. This time they returned with two deputies of the court, bearing orders to bring McKenzie back to San Francisco to stand trial for contempt.

Even before the deputies could reach the scene, things began to go badly for the thieves. The Wild Goose Company managed to retake its claims; and when McKenzie, sensing that time was short, tried to withdraw the dust and nuggets he had deposited in the vaults of the Alaska Banking and Safe Deposit Company, a sullen crowd gathered and made it clear that any attempt to make off with the gold would be mighty unhealthy for him. He left the bank empty-handed.

RESTAURANT
THE BOHEMIA
THE BOHEMIA

When the court's deputies arrived, they quickly served him with the summons and hustled him aboard a steamer bound for San Francisco. The gold he had stolen remained behind in Nome, to be returned eventually to the mine owners

McKenzie was tried in the court of appeals that winter, and upon his conviction on February 11, 1901, Judge Ross had this to say before sentence was passed:

". . . the high-handed and grossly illegal proceedings initiated almost as soon as Judge Noyes and McKenzie had set foot in Alaskan territory . . . may be safely said to have no parallel in the jurisprudence of this country."

The judge then sentenced McKenzie to spend a year in prison, but thanks to the political muscle of his friends, President McKinley was persuaded to pardon him, on grounds of ill health, after he had served only three months of his term

Noyes was later tried, removed from the bench, and fined one thousand dollars—a curiously light sentence in the face of his outrageous betrayal of office.

The faces of Nome spoke for a variety of life-styles. The prospectors above are about to venture into the bleak tundra wilderness of the Seward Peninsula for the gold that had long ago eluded them in Nome. In the photograph at left, celebrants commemorate the third annual "Footwarming" of the Radiator Club. Less jovial are the scenes at the far left and below, for the doing of Good Works was serious business to the grim white ladies of the Nome Society, which herded the patient Eskimos into church of a Sunday and put young natives on the path of righteousness.

WITH THE DEPARTURE OF McKenzie and Noyes, development of the district's large mines accelerated. The Miocene Ditch Company constructed a channel more than fifteen miles up the valley of the Nome River to bring the great volumes of water necessary to wash the placers of its extensive holdings on Glacier Creek. In 1902, Charles D. Lane, a shipowner and capitalist, built a pumping plant on the Snake River to carry water to the top of Anvil Mountain, which rises above Anvil Creek about five miles inland from Nome. The system supplied 250 miners' inches of water (a miner's inch is a flow of 1.5 cu. ft. per minute) and cost $350,000 to build. That's a lot of money in any day, but it paid for itself in the first year of operation.

These are but two examples of what men with capital could do. Men without money or a profession did not fare so well. Once the beach diggings were worked out and every inch of land in the district long-since staked, they had to choose either to return to the states, to work for wages, or to set out into the back country of the Seward Peninsula and points beyond to search for new gold fields. Thousands chose to roam the vast countryside. Many went on to uncover the new bonanzas they sought. The names of Candle, Dahl, and Taylor creeks and the Inmachuk, Niukluk and Kougarok rivers were to become famous in Nome and in the mining exchanges of the world

In time, trails were blazed up and back across the landscape. The Nome and Arctic Railroad, which extended more than fifty miles into the heart of the peninsula, carried its first passengers in 1905. And the Council City and Solomon River Railroad stretched thirty-odd miles from Council City, on the Niukluk River, to Dickson, on the coast south of Nome. Where the railroads didn't go, the trails became well marked, and roadhouses sprang up along the most heavily traveled routes to feed and shelter men and their dogs during their wanderings.

But throughout those early years following the Nome discovery, travel in winter was at each man's peril. Dog-puncher Arthur Walden illustrated this in his book with the story of an incident on a trip he took from Nome with sev-

During seagoing months, the traveler's first—and last—view of the boomtown of Nome was likely to be this waterfront scene.

Of the thousands who came to Nome to stay, a few got rich; the rest worked for wages or wandered out into the back country with undiminished hopes.

eral other men to the northeast corner of the peninsula in the middle of the 1900/1901 winter.

"At the mouth of Eschscholtz Bay we found an Eskimo and his family, wintering in their igloo From there we crossed over to Elephant Point, where three of us were again overtaken by a blizzard, which blew so hard that we couldn't even get our tent up. We lay for three days in the snow, covered up in our robes, and lived on raw bacon and hard-tack.

"It was impossible to feed the dogs properly. All we could do was to throw them pieces of bacon and hope that the right ones would get it. It was impossible to tell day from night, as the raging blizzard made even the lightest part of the day seem dark. We came through all right, but each man owned up that he thought the other men had left him when he was asleep. It is funny how these thoughts will creep up on you."

The change in communications, however, demonstrates more clearly than any other example how quickly Nome was wrenched into the twentieth century. George Edward Adams had written in *Harpers Weekly* in the spring of 1900.

"On March 22 [1900] the writer had the pleasure of reading a letter received on that day from Nome City, bearing the date of December 30, 1899 The letter was but two months and 24 days in traversing 3,000 miles through a land that three years ago was considered practically uninhabitable by white men. Such a feat seems almost miraculous The reader, sitting near the cozy fireside, can scarce picture the mail-carrier, with his trusty team of dogs, gliding along week after week over fields of ice and snow, with the thermometer ranging from forty to sixty degrees below zero."

By the end of summer, 1905, a powerful United States wireless telegraph station was in full operation at Port Safety, nineteen miles south of Nome

This last great American gold rush began in '98, flamed in '99, crested in 1900, and passed into a decline which continues to this day. Nome and the mines of the Seward Peninsula remain as testimony to the power of gold to move men and the fierce energy man can summon whenever a hostile environment challenges his hunger for riches—and adventure.

William Bronson, *whose "Rush to the Yukon" appeared in the Spring, 1965, issue of* THE AMERICAN WEST, *is editor of* Cry California, *a conservationist quarterly, and author of* The Earth Shook, The Sky Burned, *a pictorial history of the San Francisco earthquake and fire;* Still Flying and Nailed to the Mast, *a pictorial history of the Fireman's Fund Insurance Company; and* How to Kill a Golden State, *a recent best-selling study in text and pictures of the environmental agonies afflicting the state of California*

THRASHIN' TIME

BY MILTON E. SHATRAW

A Reminiscence of a Montana Boyhood

AGAINST MY FATHER'S ORDERS, my sister Iris and I had been swinging each other on the big pole gate that opened into the ranch yard. We were sitting now on the top bar of the gate, resting.

"Look! Look!" Iris was pointing Sure enough there was a little single-seated, high-wheeled car gingerly working its way along the deep-rutted road leading down from the bench across the valley.

"It's Gene Leach's automobile."

"Naw. Can't you see it's red? Leach's is blue. I bet it's the J.I.C. man."

In northwest Montana automobiles and our 1908 brand of roads had as little as possible to do with each other. So when a car approached, it was a source of great excitement for young and old alike.

"If it *is* the J.I.C. man," Iris said, "he'll stay all night, and we can sit up late and listen to them talk."

But my mind was on the car. "He'll give us a ride," I said, "like the last time. Come on. Let's go tell Ma."

We tumbled off the gate and ran to the house, screaming loud enough for all Teton county to hear, "There's an automobile coming! The J.I.C. man's coming!"

The J.I.C. man was the service representative of the J.I. Case Threshing Machine Company. He came every summer to check over our machine. Last year he had abandoned his usual hired livery rig and appeared in a brand new four-cylinder Reo painted a blinding red, and he had given everyone a breath-taking twenty-mile-an-hour ride down the long lane to the bend in the road and back. Even better than that was the fun of tagging him and my father around all day and listening to them talk "machine." Any kind of machinery had a fascination for me, but especially the huge threshing machine, which my father drove from ranch to ranch during two months of the early fall, threshing the ranchers' grain crops.

A couple of weeks ago a large wooden crate of repair parts had arrived by freight from the Case factory. Now Mr Shaeffer had come to replace the worn parts and check and adjust the whole rig. As they worked, my father, patiently trying to keep me out of the way, invented numberless errands for me to run and finally in desperation turned me loose with a long spouted oil can and a pail of very black grease. "Oil these bearings here," he directed. "Then put some grease on that big ring gear." And as a vague after-thought, "Don't get any on your clothes now."

It was a blissful afternoon. When I tramped into the house with the men for supper, my mother gave me one look and wailed, "My God, Ed? How could you do it? It'll take me a week to clean that kid up."

My father soothed her with his easy laugh and said, winking broadly at Mr. Shaeffer, "He's been a real help, Peg. I don't think we could have finished today without him." Mr. Shaeffer agreed heartily, "Never saw so much grease and oil squirted around in one day in my whole life."

I ate supper in a happy daze.

Before dark we each had our ride. The car with its soft springs and rubber-shod wheels carried us along like a magic carpet. Then the men pulled the buggy from the wagon shed, and the car took its place, because, as Mr. Shaeffer said, "If it gets rained on tonight, it'll take me half the day tomorrow to get it started."

After that, we sat around on the porch listening while the grown folks talked about that wonderful place called "back east," where Mr Shaeffer came from. He told about the St Louis Fair, about cities where automobiles were almost as common as horses (which I could hardly believe), about houses lighted by gas and people riding around in electric trolley cars. He gave us news of the coming elections, the latest reports on grain and beef prices, and told how Teddy Roose-

velt was digging a huge ditch a mile wide and forty miles long across Panama, wherever that was. How I wished that day would never end! I wouldn't have traded it for Fourth of July, Christmas, and the last day of school all rolled into one.

Just in front of our five-room log house was a forty-acre pasture where we kept the working horses, a few ailing cattle, and our lone milk cow. In the angle where the barbed wire pasture fence met the big roping and branding corral stood the "threshing machine." Except for the tarp that covered the cylinder head and gear box, it stood there exposed to the weather ten months of the year.

Its bright red paint had faded to a dull brick color. In winter the wind-whipped snow drifted deep around it, sifting into its innermost working parts. The spring rains seeped in also, starting pockets of rust and rot. Later still, the blazing summer sun took over and got in its dirty work of flaking the paint, warping the wood, drying up the grease and oil. But when threshing time came, it always worked. Crouching between the high conical grain stacks, gulping down the sheaves with a great roaring and shaking, sending out clouds of dust and chaff, it filled the big sacks with silvery oats and tawny wheat, and piled the clean yellow straw higher and higher. It was a major source of income to my father; for me it provided endless hours of entertainment and pleasure.

Standing bent-kneed on its towering back, I would—with loud cries and man-sized swear words—pretend to drive the four-horse team out through the lane gate and down the valley. Sometimes I would stand on the platform of the power unit, urging on my six teams by means of a long whip borrowed without permission from the whipsocket of the buggy. Even on rainy days I could see it from the kitchen window, standing in its bleak surroundings and mud puddles, and I would dream of the excitement of the coming "thrashing."

The next few weeks after Mr. Shaeffer's visit were mighty busy ones for everybody. My father had to get things in shape before he left on his threshing rounds. The last of the hay crop was cut and stacked, harness and threshing gear put into shape, the range cattle brought up and put on the home ranch. My mother had meat and vegetables to can, new school dresses to make for my sisters, and new shirts for me. Also, since the school teacher always lived with us, and a new one was due in early September, there was a horrible amount of house cleaning and clothes-washing to be done before my mother was satisfied. Horrible for me at any-rate for it seemed to me that the grownups spent all their waking hours dreaming up errands and jobs that only an eight-year-old boy could do.

I could hardly wait until the time came when I'd *really* be old enough to join the crew, and maybe take Johnny Pfeiffer's place up there cracking the whip over the six-teams, getting up each morning to water and feed them, making the last rounds at night. Then, digging a hole in the side of a newly-made straw stack and wrapping my blanket around me, I would slide in and pull the straw snug about me and sleep warm and content, the thousand-acre prairie for a bedroom.

My father and his men often slept in this way in temperatures approaching zero, but they all agreed that getting up next morning was really tough. Some of the crew became known as "two-finger men." For them a morning wash-up consisted of gingerly dipping the first two fingers of each hand among the floating pieces of ice in the watering-trough and delicately dampening their eyes and lips. This was followed by a hasty wipe with the rough sleeve of a sheepskin coat. Then they were ready to head for the warm ranchhouse kitchen and a scalding cup of black coffee.

Early in September our new teacher arrived from the East and was introduced to our beat-up log schoolhouse and its seven students, each in a different grade. A couple of days later, in the cold, ruddy light of early morning, the little cavalcade of threshers left for their first stand, where they would meet my father's partner Carl, who would have spare teams and harnesses.

My father, standing easily on the careening separator, guided the four-horse team through the pasture gate and along the lane. Johnny Pfeiffer followed with one team pulling the power unit and another tailgating behind. The Studebaker wagon, loaded with bags of oats, bedrolls, and other miscellaneous gear came next with Leo driving its team of four. Frank, astride his prized cow pony and leading Leo's saddle horse, brought up the rear.

By dark the rig would be set up at a ranch twenty miles to the east in the dry-land country, since the grain matured earlier in this high-bench land. The ranchers in the irrigated valleys to the west would be visited next. Then, late in October, my father would head towards home where he made his last stand to thresh his own grain crop. My mother came to dread the long absences these threshing trips necessitated There was always the hired man to do the outdoor work; and the school teacher and my teenage cousin Joe, for company, and they could give some comfort and help in times of worry and trouble. But there was no substitute for my father's calm approach to a crisis and his competent manner of dealing with it. This was a good year, though, and the days drifted by, monotonous and uneventful. Once a heavy fall of snow held up operations long enough for him to return home for a few days to catch up on the more pressing chores and to show off the brand-new curly beard and sweeping mustache, both bright red, that he was growing as protection from the elements. These contrasted sharply with his blue eyes and jet black hair. The school teacher was visibly impressed, and whispered soulfully to my mother one night as they stood by the sink doing dishes, "He's positively the handsomest man I ever saw."

My mother, flushing pink with pride, whispered back, "Yes, I know. But I never tell him so. He might get a swelled head."

October brought Indian summer, the lazy warm days carrying no hint of the biting cold and swirling snow soon to follow.

Canada geese in long flickering V's drifted across the sky, and their loud honking beat forlornly on our childish ears. "Where do they come from; where do they go?" we wondered. Each little pond and water-filled slough was littered with bright-feathered mallards and teal, snowy canvasbacks, and crested mergansers. Out among the grain stubble wandered flocks of prairie chickens, gleaning the grain left behind by the clattering binders and the lumbering grain wagons.

School settled to the usual dreary grind. The teacher turned out to be the no-nonsense-in-school type. You did your lessons and behaved properly, or wound up standing in the corner or getting your knuckles rapped with the ruler, which seemed to be always in her hand and with which, I'm bound to say, she rapped us all with equal generosity.

But in the evenings, Grace, as we were soon calling her, was different. After supper we all crowded around the kitchen table under the yellow light from the nickel-plated coal-oil lamp, and she played simple pencil-and-paper games with us. Or she read to us from storybooks or the *Youth's Companion*. Sometimes we went on exciting shopping trips through the mail-order catalog. All this, of course, was when she was not entertaining the many unattached males who lived within riding distance of our ranch.

We watched the weather apprehensively, fearing the fine days might break up into one of our fierce snowstorms and bring with it a ruined grain crop. We were in the last week of the month when Frank arrived one evening with the welcome news that the rig and its crew would arrive by Friday night.

"I sure hope so," my mother told him. "This running the ranch by myself, together with worrying about the weather, has got me about worn out."

"Not too worn out to fix us some good eats, I hope," Frank said. "We ain't done so good the last couple of places."

My mother, her tiredness forgotten, reared up snorting fire. "Why those cheap - - - - - - - - !" She broke off with an apologetic glance at the teacher and started firing out orders right and left. My cousin Joe, came first.

"Joe, you see there's plenty of dry wood split up. I'll have a lot of baking to do."

"Iris, you better stay home from school tomorrow. Somebody'll have to watch the baby, and you'll have to go tell Uncle George to bring up that quarter of beef he's saving for us."

And, turning to Nettie, a neighbor who had come to help with some sewing, "We'll have to let the sewing go for now. I'll need your help in the kitchen."

"Ma," I broke in, "can I — ?"

She whirled around to me. "Whatever you want, it's *no*. I haven't got time for any of your monkeyshines. Just keep that woodbox full. You hear?"

"Yes, Ma," I answered meekly. I knew when she had a full head of steam and meant business.

It was full dark, and everyone had about given them up when I heard the eager whinny of a tired horse approaching his home barn. Running out on the porch, I could just make out the bulky silhouette of the separator at the top of the grade against the faint starlight of the Big Dipper.

"They're here! They're here!" I screamed into the kitchen and was off the porch like a shot, only to be stopped short by my mother's sharp voice from the doorway.

"You, Mick! Get back here and get your coat and cap." But on my way back out she added softly, "You want to catch your death?" and gave my shaggy hair a happy yank.

Accompanied by the musical clinking of iron wheels and horseshoes against the stony road, the caravan swung through the big gate.

"Whoa! Damn you all! Stand still a minute," my father spoke roughly to the horses. Then, more softly to my mother. "We're here, Peg. Boy, what a day! And are we starved! Didn't stop to eat. Seems like we've been on the road forever."

By the time the sun had cleared the prairie's rim that Saturday morning, everyone was hard at work. A team of horses dragged the thresher to its place between the grain stacks. The power unit was lined up on a spot carefully measured from the separator so that the sections of the drive shaft would come out just right when the two parts of the machine were joined. Johnny and Joe watered and fed the horses. Carl and my father uncovered the cylinder and set up the feeding tables ready to start. As usual I tried to be everywhere at once and succeeded in getting stepped on and bumped into continually. But all were in good humor, for the sky was clear and the sun was bright. It would be a good threshing day.

We hurried through our workday breakfast of hot oatmeal and cream, ham and eggs with fried potatoes, and platters of biscuit dough fried like pancakes, which my father liked so well he called them "dough gods." Just as we were finishing, the neighbors started to arrive—Uncle George and his hired man, each with a team and hay wagon, followed by Aunt Minnie and their kids in the spring wagon. From the opposite direction came my cousins George and Lilly and their gang. Several other neighbors arrived in hay wagons and on horseback. Finally came Torval Johannsen, a middle-aged bachelor who was already a persistent admirer of the new teacher and who spoke a wild jargon of broken English. He drove in with thundering wagon and flying hair, and skidded to a halt in an obvious attempt to attract Grace's attention. Seeing her on the porch, he waved and grinned, showing his huge mouthful of tobacco-stained teeth. Then he turned to the rest of his audience and asked, "Vell, vy iss ve vaiting? Torval iss come."

"Hi! Hup!" Johnny's voice, competing with a series of loud whipcracks, announced the beginning of the day's work. Eight tons of horseflesh strained again the heavy sweeps, and the big cylinder began slowly, silently to revolve. Then, as the teams stepped up to a faster pace, its silence turned into a low growl, and from there it went up through the scale until it became a steady, singing roar. The sprocket wheels along the sides of the separator eased into motion and picked up speed, their

chains tightening, glinting like water in the sun. Deep in the big machine's belly, the sieves began to shiver and shake, and the slats on the straw-carrier rattled and banged. The threshing machine had come to life. When the horses' pace and the whine of the cylinder satisfied my father's critical eye and ear, he nodded his head to the men on the grain stacks, and they began tossing the sheaves to the feeding tables. Here the bandcutters slashed the heavy twine, loosening the stalks that slid off and were gulped down by the ravenous monster.

I watched the whole operation intently, desperately wanting to have some part in it. True, my father had told me to keep the water pails full, and once Carl had allowed me to cut the hank of heavy cord to proper lengths for sewing the filled grain sacks. But mostly it was, "Keep away from that team, Mick, the off horse kicks." And "Don't fool around that tumbling rod, boy. You'll get your overh'alls caught in a coupling and that'll be the end of you." Everyone was too busy with his own job to find one for me.

Dinner was a welcome break. The men washed up with much snorting and blowing at the wash bench outside the kitchen door, then combed their soaking wet hair with the metal comb hanging by a string beside the mirror nailed to the log wall. With a great deal of joking and scraping of chairs, the places around the kitchen table were quickly filled.

Feeding the "thrashing" crew had a special significance in those times. A sort of county-fair atmosphere prevailed, for it was an opportunity for the women to prove their reputations as cooks. Nothing fancy, just good, well-cooked food and lots of it. Of course, any cook with an ounce of pride belittled her efforts at least enough to ensure a few handsome compliments. My mother, who baked bread fit for the Gods, always remarked as she passed the platter that "it hadn't raised just right this time," or that the mouth-watering coconut layer cake she was cutting had "fallen just a bit when one of the kids had slammed the kitchen door." Everyone knew that they were perfection itself—and so did she.

I was sure I would die of hunger before those at the first table were finished. It wasn't hard to persuade the younger men (also dying of hunger) to wait for the second table, for that was the one the schoolteacher presided over. As many of us older kids as there was room for also ate then. The women and smaller fry straggled along behind at a third and final table

After dinner the men gathered in groups on the porch and down by the bunkhouse, discussing the price of wool and beef on the Chicago market and how much wheat and barley were bringing at the Conrad elevators. By one o'clock everyone was hard at work again.

But the festive atmosphere among the workers was gone now. A biting wind had blown up out of the north, and the sun had disappeared behind darkening clouds. The men cast apprehensive glances at the sky, making doleful predictions of snow before morning, and they increased their efforts. All too soon, for me, the last load of grain went through the machine, the neighbors gathered up their families and effects, said their last good-byes and left for their homes to batten down for the expected storm; and we were alone again. Another harvest was over.

After supper we all sat in the kitchen talking over the happenings of the day. My father had almost disappeared into a thick cloud of smoke from his favorite calabash pipe Frank and Leo were puffing contentedly on fresh-rolled Bull Durham cigarettes. I had propositioned each of them hopefully for "just one puff," but my father's disapproving gaze discouraged that, and I retreated to my favorite perch on the freshly filled woodbox. I sat there in the shadows thinking about the day and how splendid it must be to be grown up and actually taking part in the "thrashing." Finally, seeing the relaxed expression on my father's face, I blurted out, "Pa, next year can't I help *some* on the machine?"

He answered, a bit shortly, "You're too young, Mick. And it's too dangerous."

I persisted, close to tears. "But how'm I ever going to know how to run a thrashing machine if you *never* let me do anything?"

His eyes softened, and he laid his pipe on the table beside him. "Come here, Mick," he said.

I slid off the woodbox and walked slowly over to him. His strong arm crooked around my shoulders.

"Look," he said, "just as soon as you're old enough I'll let you start doing things. Right now you're learning how. One way to learn anything is to watch. Some day you'll be the best damn thrashin' machine man in the whole state of Montana Only it's going to be a different kind of machine."

He reached up to the mantel shelf and pulled down a catalog. Opening it, he pointed to a picture of a huge steam traction engine.

"That's what we'll have pretty soon instead of the old horsepower rig," he said proudly. "How'll you like to run that?"

I stared at the brightly colored picture unbelievingly. It looked so huge . . . so complicated . . . so fascinating . . almost too much to grasp.

"Gosh, Pa. You mean it?" Then I remembered. "How soon you going to get it? Won't I ever get to drive the horses?"

He laughed, "Don't worry, Mick. We haven't got it yet."

Later that night I went blissfully off to bed, already feeling my hand on the throttle as I steered the gleaming new rig across the prairie. I could picture myself sitting up there beneath its green metal canopy, its huge red wheels rolling along crushing down the heavy sod, its emblem of a bald eagle on top of the world painted boldly on its side, proclaiming to all that this was a genuine J. I. Case steam engine.

Milton E. Shatraw's *previous articles for* THE AMERICAN WEST *include "School Days" (Spring, 1966) and "The Trip to Town" (November, 1967). He is presently completing a book-length collection of reminiscences of a boyhood spent in the high plains of Montana.*

TO WASH THIS LAND IN BLOOD...

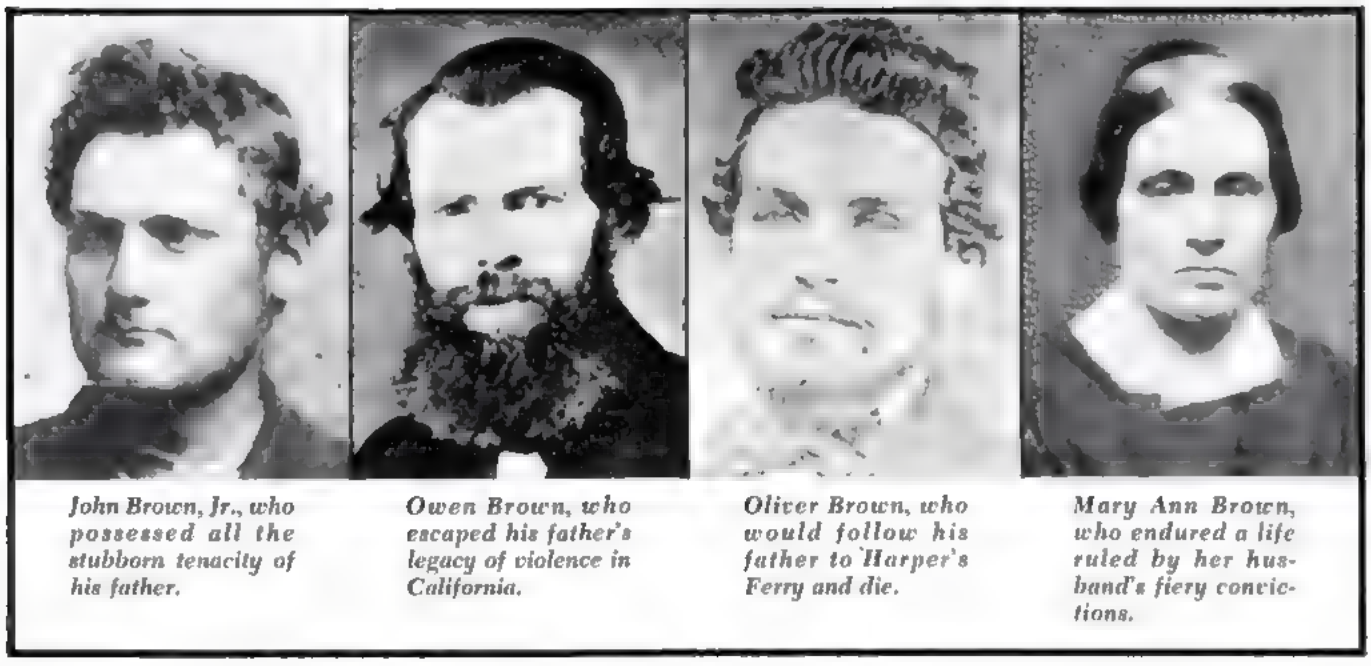
John Brown in Kansas – Part One of a Two-Part Article

By STEPHEN B. OATES

BY HIS OWN ESTIMATION John Brown, aged fifty-five, was an old man when he left northern New York for Kansas in the summer of 1855. He was gaunt, grim-faced, and sickly, having suffered for years from recurrent attacks of the ague, a malarial-type fever attended by fits of shivering and blazing temperature. His hair, which he combed straight back over his head, was coarse and grizzled. His mouth was an inflexible slit, and his gray eyes shone like polished steel. Yes, he had recently confessed to his older children, he was an old man, guilty of many sins before God and scarred by a lifetime of hardship and failure, which he knew at last was part of his trial on earth. Yet he had a sense of profound exaltation because his follies only made him realize how dependent he was on the one, true God and made him believe all the more in God's justice, His mercy, and the divine purpose of His plans. And the journey Brown was now undertaking to Kansas was part of God's design, he believed, a journey that might lead him out of his season of trial and perhaps to a special destiny.

ALL HIS ADULT LIFE Brown had been an austere, unpredictable man with a strangely divided personality, flawed and somehow tragic. If he was extremely religious, he could also be cruel, selfish, and intractably self-righteous, with an imperial egotism and a vindictive nature that made him intolerant and unappreciative of others, especially his own sons. He could become obsessed with a single idea—now slavery, now land speculation, now a wool crusade in Massachusetts, now a Negro community in the Adirondacks—and pursue his current fad with single-minded determination. He could be notoriously inept and even unscrupulous as a businessman, yet at other times, as honest as Moses. And he could be kind and gentle—extremely gentle. He would rock a baby lamb in his arms; stay up all night caring for a sick child, or his ailing father, or his afflicted first wife; hold children on both knees and sing them the sad, melancholy refrains of Isaac Watts' old hymn, "Blow ye the trumpet, blow." He would stand at the graves of his four children who had died of dysentery, weeping and praising God in an ecstasy of despair. He could teach his children to fear God and keep the Commandments—and exhibit terrible anxiety when the older ones began questioning the value of religion. He could offer to take a Negro child into his home and educate him, deplore racial discrimination in northern churches, hide runaways, and feel an almost paralyzing bitterness toward slavery itself—that "sum of villainies," that "sin against God"—and toward all the wicked people, in the South and in the federal government, who sought to preserve and perpetuate it.

He was born in 1800 (the same year Thomas Jefferson, the Virginia slave owner, came to power) in a stark, shutterless farmhouse in West Torrington, Connecticut. His father, a



John Brown, Jr., who possessed all the stubborn tenacity of his father.

Owen Brown, who escaped his father's legacy of violence in California.

Oliver Brown, who would follow his father to Harper's Ferry and die.

Mary Ann Brown, who endured a life ruled by her husband's fiery convictions.

His vision was freedom for the black men of the South and with the zealot's conviction of Godly righteousness, he carried his dream to the Kansas frontier, where it blossomed into one of the bloodiest conflicts in the history of the West.

cobbler and tanner, who soon moved the family to Ohio's Western Reserve, taught the boy to fear an austere Calvinist God and to oppose slavery and its defenders. His mother died when he was eight, a tragedy that left him devastated with grief. When his father remarried, Brown refused to accept his stepmother emotionally, and "pined after his own mother for years." He grew into an arrogant and contentious young man, who ordered others about, a brother remarked, like "A king against whom there is no rising up." Around girls, however, Brown was painfully shy, a quality which deprived him of "a suitable connecting link" between the sexes—and which, as he admitted himself, "might under some circumstances have proved my ruin." Although he dropped out of school at an early age, he read the Bible meticulously and committed its entire contents to memory, taking pleasure in correcting anybody who quoted wrongly from it. In 1816, having been admitted to membership in the Congregational Church of Hudson, Ohio, he aspired to become a minister and traveled east to study. But he had to abandon his plans when he developed an inflammation of the eyes and ran short of funds. Failure was a leitmotif that was to run throughout his life.

Returning to Hudson, he built his own tannery and overcame his fears enough to marry Dianthe Lusk, who was pious and "remarkably plain." Dianthe bore seven children, whom Brown rigorously disciplined with a whip in one hand and a Bible in the other. In western Pennsylvania, where they resided for ten years, he organized an Independent Congregational Society and frequently preached, drawing his sermons from the works of Jonathan Edwards, whose mystical Puritanism greatly influenced his own religious beliefs. In the late 1820's, however, there were signs that he was entering another season of trial. Dianthe showed symptoms of deep-rooted emotional troubles, and then she and two of their children died. He soon married again, this time to a large, reticent girl named Mary Ann Day. Mary Ann gave him thirteen children, seven of whom died in childhood. There were tragedies in his worldly concerns too—he was wiped out in the Panic of 1837, declared bankrupt in 1842. But like other frontier businessmen, Brown had a reckless, go-ahead spirit. Recouping his fortunes, he plunged into another business venture, and another. Everything ended in failure.

As he grew older, Brown became more self-righteous and fixed in his convictions than ever. He lectured his children about providential interpositions and their trial on earth, beseeching them to suffer the word of exhortation. He became increasingly disturbed by all the proslavery wickedness that prevailed in the United States. He worked on the Underground Railroad in Ohio, publicly opposed the state's "black laws," attempted to integrate a Congregational church he attended in Franklin Mills and was expelled for his effort. After that, he grew more violent in his denunciations of slavery. He would gladly lay down his life for the destruction of that institution, because "death for a good cause," he told a friend, was "glorious." While living in Springfield, Massachusetts, he not only chided Negroes for passively submitting to white oppression but worked out a secret scheme to run slaves out of the South through a "Subterranean Pass Way." He may also have indulged in bloody fantasies of inciting a slave insurrection in the South, such as his black militant friend, Henry Highland Garnet, advocated. In 1851 Brown exhorted Negroes to kill any southerner or federal officer who tried to enforce the Fugitive Slave Law and enlisted forty-four Springfield blacks into a mutual-defense organization called the "Branch of the United States League of Gileadites," based on the story of Gideon in the Book of Judges.

After a monumental debacle in the wool business, Brown returned to Ohio and tried to make ends meet as a wool grower and farmer. Still, he remained deeply troubled by the slavery sickness that infected his country; and in January, 1854, he wrote a letter to *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (a Negro journal published in Rochester, New York) which castigated those "malignant spirits"—those "fiends clothed in human form"—who used the churches, the courts, and the national government to protect such an abomination, and advocated an immediate end to the corruption of "our truly republican and democratic institutions." But his words did no good: just four months later, on May 30, 1854, President Pierce signed the Kansas-Nebraska Bill into law, an act which eradicated the old Missouri Compromise line and decreed that henceforth the citizens of each territory would vote on whether to have slavery or not. At once, antislavery northerners decried the act as a southern conspiracy to extend slavery into the West—and maybe the North as well. The first step in the plot was to occupy Kansas. Salmon P. Chase of Ohio saw it; so did William H. Seward of New York. "Come on, then, gentlemen of the slave States," Seward cried; "since there is no escaping your challenge, I accept it in behalf of the cause of freedom. We will engage in competition for the virgin soil of Kansas, and God give the victory to the side that is stronger in numbers as it is in right."

"Come on, then, gentlemen of the slave States; since there is no escaping your challenge, I accept it in behalf of the cause of freedom. We will engage in competition for the virgin soil of Kansas, and God give the victory to the side that is stronger in numbers as it is in right."

In response Eli Thayer formed the New England Emigrant Aid Society and, with visions of making money in Kansas as well as saving it from the Slave Power, sent out a handful of colonists that summer. At the same time hundreds of pioneers from the northwestern states also started for Kansas to make new lives for themselves on a "free-soil frontier." That fall five of Brown's sons (Salmon, Owen, Frederick, Jason, and John, Jr.) decided to emigrate as well. Later, Brown made up his mind to follow them and seek work as a surveyor to investigate prospects for speculating in land, farming, and the selling of horses and cattle.

In the summer of 1855, he moved the remainder of his family to North Elba, in the Adirondack Mountains, where he received a series of letters from his sons that were to alter significantly his reasons for moving on to Kansas. Proslavery gangs from neighboring Missouri—John, Jr. wrote—were attempting to make Kansas a slave state "by *means no matter* how foul." Already they had formed "Annoyance Associations" to terrorize free-state settlements and drive abolitionists from the territory. Worse, John, Jr., had heard that "hundreds of thousands" of men—"desperate" men from every slaveholding state in the Union—were now massing along the border "to fasten slavery on this glorious land" through outright invasion. Many of the free-state settlers in the Pottawatomie vicinity, where the Brown boys had located, were afraid to resist. And the Missourians, hearing of such cowardice, boasted that "they could obtain possession of the polls in any of our election precincts without having to fire a gun." (Although John, Jr., did not say so, the Missourians *had* taken possession of Kansas polls: on March 30, no fewer than five thousand of them—"enough to kill every God-damned abolitionist in the Territory," said one Missouri captain—had swarmed across the border to vote in the election for a territorial legislature. By using fists and threatening murder, unseating fair judges and counting illegal ballots, the intruders had elected an overwhelmingly proslavery legislature.)

What could be done to stop the proslavery menace? John, Jr., wanted to fight. "The Antislavery portion of the inhabitants should *immediately, thoroughly arm and organize themselves in military companies*," John, Jr., declared, repeating virtually the same thing Brown had said when he organized the U.S. League of Gileadites. But antislavery Kansans were desperately short of guns, John, Jr., said, and he requested his father to gather a number of revolvers,

rifles, and knives to bring along when he came to Kansas.

The letter aroused Brown's fighting spirit, and he set about zealously soliciting money and weapons from antislavery groups in New York and Massachusetts. As he did so, additional letters arrived, enflaming his passions further. "The storm every day thickens," John, Jr., wrote, "Its near approach is hourly more clearly seen by all." Now was the time to help in the cause, for he was convinced that "the great drama will open here, when will be presented the great struggle in arms, of Freedom and Despotism in America. Give us the arms, and we are ready for the contest."

Brown was ready to move. All his life he had believed in predestination and providential signs and the storm gathering over Kansas gave him a glimpse of his own destiny, of what Providence had foreordained for him all along: he saw himself with a sword, exhorting his men to fight for the Lord and John Brown out on the Kansas prairie, just as Gideon had implored the men of Israel to fight the Midianites.

He left North Elba in August and traveled to Ohio, where he solicited more money and weapons—including several artillery broadswords. His son Oliver and son-in-law Henry Thompson joined him later. Then they loaded all the "freight" —rifles, revolvers, knives, and swords—into a wagon; tossed in Brown's surveying instruments, a tent, and some blankets; and set out to "meddle directly with the peculiar institution" in Kansas.

WHEN BROWN ARRIVED at "Brown's Station" on North Middle Creek, some six miles northwest of Dutch Henry's Crossing on the Pottawatomie, he was dismayed at what he found. His "children" (including the families of Jason and John, Jr.) were living in makeshift tents, "shivering over their little fires and exposed to the dreadfully cutting winds." All the men were so sick with the ague that, if the storm had broken then, they would not have had the strength to fight.

As head of the family, Brown took charge at once, unboxing and distributing the weapons, gathering in crops, and nursing his children back to health. As he did so, he doubtlessly inquired about what had taken place in Kansas politics since John, Jr., had written last. As it happened, the "bogus" proslavery legislature, meeting at Shawnee Mission in July, had legalized slavery in Kansas and provided severe punishment for anybody who asserted that slavery did not exist there, or denied a man's right to own slaves, or circulated abolitionist literature, or assisted runaways. Governor Andrew H. Reeder, a moderate trying to maintain a semblance of justice, vetoed all these laws, but the legislators defiantly overrode him—and some members even threatened his life. Finally, President Pierce dismissed him from office ostensibly because he had speculated in Indian lands, and sent out Wilson Shannon as the new territorial executive. A doughfaced Cincinnati lawyer and former governor of Ohio, Shannon recognized the Shawnee Mission legislature as legal, befriended the leaders of the Kansas proslavery party, and imbibed all their suspicions of the free-state settlers, who formed a majority of the population.

In open defiance, free-state men—under the leadership of Charles Robinson, James Henry Lane, and others—launched a movement to establish a rival government and to write a free-state constitution—a movement in which John, Jr., himself had been actively involved until the sickness and stormy weather had set in. An election for a free-state congressman, as well as for delegates to a constitutional convention to convene at Topeka, was scheduled for October 9. Free-state citizens in the Pottawatomie settlement expected trouble at the polls, perhaps another invasion of Missourians (150 of them had cast illegal votes in the election for a territorial legislature), or perhaps interference on the part of the local proslavery minority.

"The storm every day thickens. Its near approach is hourly more clearly seen by all. The great drama will open here, when will be presented the great struggle in arms, of Freedom and Despotism in America. Give us the arms, and we are ready for the contest."

On election day Brown accompanied his sons down to the Pottawatomie Meeting House. They went "powerfully armed," but no enemy appeared. Evidently Brown did not vote in this or any other election while he was there. (He had staked out no claim and did not regard himself as a Kansas citizen.) Since no invasion had occurred, Brown believed that Missouri might be giving up on Kansas and that prospects of making it a free state were improving; yet he still wrote his wife and daughters: "I humbly trust we may be kept & spared: to meet again on Earth; *but if not* let us all endeavor earnestly to secure admission to that Eternal Home where will be no more bitter seperations [sic]; 'where the wicked shall cease from troubling; & the weary be at rest.' "

With no fighting to do at present, Brown set about putting Brown's Station in order. Working outside despite the "cutting cold winds and storms," he fashioned a shanty for Jason and Ellen, then constructed a log cabin for John, Jr., and his family. Brown spent Thanksgiving in the nearby town of Osawatomie, visiting a preacher brother-in-law named Samuel Adair. Adair later told a couple of neighbors his guest seemed "impressed with the idea that God had raised him up on purpose to break the jaws of the wicked."

While Brown was at Osawatomie, he heard electrifying news from Lawrence, the chief free-state settlement in Kansas, an army of Missourians had invaded the territory and was now massing along the Wakarusa River to burn the

settlement to the ground. Brown hurried back to North Middle Creek, gathered four of his sons, and took a wagon loaded with guns and swords to help defend the beleaguered town. Because of Brown's zeal "in the cause of freedom, both before and after his arrival in the Territory," Robinson and Lane, the free-state leaders, gave the old man command of a volunteer company. Brown's sons later asserted that he wanted to steal up on the Missourians during the night and slaughter them in their sleep. But fighting of any sort was averted when Governor Shannon and the free-state leaders worked out a peace treaty in which the latter secretly agreed not to resist the bogus laws. Then the governor persuaded the Missourians to withdraw, and the so-called "Wakarusa War" came to an end.

Brown himself was probably disappointed that a general bloodletting had not taken place (he had not brought along those broadswords for the sake of appearances). Nevertheless, he returned to Brown's Station greatly excited. "I did not see the least sign of cowardice or want of self-possession exhibited by any volunteer of . . . the free State Force," he wrote Mary Ann. Truly, in this heroic struggle between Good and Evil, they had all sustained "the high character of the Revolutionary Fathers." His excitement remained high when Kansas voters ratified the free-state constitution drafted at Topeka and elections were scheduled in January for a free-state governor and legislature. "What now remains for the Free State men of Kansas," Brown rejoiced, "is to hold the ground they now possess, *and Kansas is free*."

He changed his mind, however, when an ominous sequence of events indicated to him that a monstrous conspiracy was underfoot to force slavery on Kansas by subterfuge and violence, a conspiracy that in Brown's view involved not only the bogus territorial government and its Missouri and southern allies, but the Pierce administration and the United States Army as well.

First, President Pierce delivered a special address to Congress in January, 1856, in which he blamed all of Kansas' troubles on northern emigrant aid societies, upheld the bogus legislature, branded the free-state constitution as "revolutionary," and warned that organized resistance on the part of free-state Kansans would be regarded as "treasonable insurrection." Brown was convinced that Pierce intended "to crush the men of Kansas," and angrily predicted that the President would "find his hands full before it is over."

Then word came to Pottawatomie that border Missouri was *not* going to give up on Kansas, that proslavery forces planned to incite a "general disturbance" there, and that Lawrence itself was threatened with attack. At the same time, reports arrived that a proslavery gang had brutally murdered a free-state man near Leavenworth and that free-state people in the vicinity had fled to Lawrence. For Brown, these were "shocking outrages," and he wrote his wife that "we may soon again be called upon to 'buckle on our Armor': which by the help of God we will do."

Then, as the snows melted and wagon trains started arriving in Kansas from the North, the proslavery press launched an editorial crusade against the "abolitionist invasion" and called on the Deep South for help. "War! War!!" screamed the Missouri *Squatter Sovereign*. "Sound the bugle . . . over the length and breadth of the land, cried the *Kansas Pioneer*, "and leave not an Abolitionist in the Territory . . ."

With proslavery forces threatening a war of extermination, could there be any doubt of a general proslavery conspiracy in Kansas? Thus when United States troops turned up in the Pottawatomie vicinity, for the "ostensible purpose of removing *intruders* from certain Indian lands," Brown became as paranoid as a southerner hearing the cry of insurrection on the wind. He dispatched a letter to Congressman Joshua H. Giddings of Ohio, charging that "the real object" of those troops was to enforce the "*Hellish enactments*" of the bogus legislature—laws which the Browns had repeatedly broken. Brown was certain that the next move "of the Administration and its Proslavery masters" would be to make Pottawatomie citizens submit to "those Infernal enactments" or to "assume what will be termed *treasonable grounds*" by shooting the soldiers. "I ask in the name of Almighty God: I ask in the name of our venerated forefathers: I ask in the name of all that is good or true men ever hold dear; will Congress suffer us to be driven to such 'dire extremities'? *Will anything be done?*"

Giddings replied that Pierce would not dare use federal troops "to shoot the citizens of Kansas"; but Brown was not convinced, and John, Jr., echoed the old man's sentiments. If proslavery forces continued their "aggressive acts" against Kansas, "the war-cry heard upon our plains will reverberate not only through the hemp and tobacco fields of Missouri but through the 'Rice Swamps,' the cotton and sugar plantations of the Sunny South." If "the first act in the Drama of insane Despotism is to be performed here, you may look elsewhere for the theatre of other acts."

"The war-cry heard upon our plains will reverberate not only through the hemp and tobacco fields of Missouri but through the 'Rice Swamps,' the cotton and sugar plantations of the Sunny South. The first act in the Drama of insane Despotism is to be performed here. . . ."

At least one act in that "insane despotism" was to take place in Pottawatomie. Word came that copies of the bogus laws were now being circulated among territorial officers and that Judge Sterling G. Cato, a staunch proslavery man, would hold the U.S. district court session for Franklin County at Dutch Henry's tavern. Pottawatomie buzzed with anxious questions: Would the court enforce the laws? Would offenders

be arrested, imprisoned? Brown grew terribly belligerent when he heard the news. "For once," he wrote his wife, "I have no desire (all things considered) to have the Slave Power cease its acts of aggression. Their foot shall slide in due time."

He started to leave Pottawatomie (perhaps to do some surveying for the Indians) only to change his mind after the arrival of both a deputy marshal, to subpoena jurors for Cato's court, and a tax assessor, who announced that all property would be assessed and taxed according to the laws. At a settlers' meeting in Osawatomie, Brown declared that he was an abolitionist and that he would rather see the Union

"I ask in the name of Almighty God; I ask in the name of our venerated forefathers; I ask in the name of all that is good or true men hold dear; will Congress suffer us to be driven to such dire extremities? Will anything be done?"

drenched in blood than pay taxes to the proslavery government (even though he had no claim and would not have to pay taxes anyway). He swore that he would kill any officer of either the territorial or the U.S. governments who tried to make him obey the bogus laws.

The meeting was a stormy one, and was climaxed by a bolt of conservatives who wanted to submit to the laws. The remaining settlers adopted a set of resolutions warning that anybody who attempted to assess taxes or enforce the laws would do so at his "peril." Brown detected the presence of God in these and other developments in the territory. When he heard, for example, that a Congressional committee, headed by William A. Howard of Michigan, had arrived to investigate conditions in Kansas, Brown trusted that much good would grow out of the committee's work (two of its three members were antislavery), "but at all events God will take care of his own cause." At the same time, he was haunted by a constant ringing in his ears: it was "the despairing cry of millions whose woes none but God knows. Bless the Lord, O my soul, for he hears."

When Cato opened court at Dutch Henry's tavern on April 21, it was demonstrably a proslavery gathering. On the day the court opened, Brown went with the Pottawatomie Rifles, a volunteer home-defense organization commanded by John Brown, Jr., to present Cato with the free-state resolutions and to demonstrate on the parade ground. The court was unimpressed, and went on to indict Benjamin Cochran, Nelson King, and David Baldwin (all free-state men) for relatively minor crimes, two of which did not involve the slavery question at all. No arrests were made, however, nor were the Browns or anybody else who had actually violated the black laws indicted. On April 22, Cato moved his court to Anderson County, where it indicted James Townsley, a free-state man who resided on the North Fork of Pottawatomie Creek, for assault with intent to kill.

After the Cato court episode, tension grew worse on the Pottawatomie. Rumors continued that "a distant storm" was gathering, that any day now a Missouri horde would invade Kansas and exterminate every abolitionist there, as Missouri leaders had threatened to do for months. As the rumors and threats increased in intensity, open hostility must have broken out between free-state settlers on the creek and their proslavery neighbors—especially Allen Wilkinson, the Shermans, and the Doyles, who were members of the proslavery Law-and-Order Party. None of them owned slaves, but all championed the *right* of slavery, were active in proslavery politics, defended the bogus government, wanted Kansas to become a South-dominated state, and probably viewed most if not all their free-state neighbors as "Yankee extremists" and "fanatical abolitionists" for resisting the bogus laws.

Actually, most free-state men on the creek were not fanatical abolitionists at all. Fully two-thirds of them, like most antislavery settlers elsewhere in the territory, entertained considerable anti-Negro prejudice, and had voted in favor of a Negro-exclusion clause in the Topeka Constitution that would keep free blacks out of Kansas as well as slaves. They intended to make Kansas free all right, but free and white.

Only Brown and a handful of others were radical or ultra abolitionists. But again, the Shermans and their cohorts apparently saw little difference among their free-state opponents and made repeated threats "to shoot & exterminate" them, echoing the invective of the proslavery press. Whether or not Wilkinson, the Shermans, and the Doyles, planned to carry out their threats may never be known. What is known is that Brown himself grew to fear and detest these men, viewing them as part of the whole tapestry of evil which proslavery forces were now weaving over Kansas.

The signs multiplied that the long-expected storm was about to break. A lone assassin wounded a proslavery sheriff near Lawrence, and the proslavery press, exploiting the incident for everything it was worth, called for "War to the knife and knife to the hilt." As though inspired by such bloody headlines, drunken proslavery elements in Kansas murdered two free-state men and (for lack of tar and feathers) stripped and cottoned another. Then, on May 2, Jefferson Buford led a battalion of armed southerners into the territory, with banners proclaiming *"The Supremacy of the White Race"* and *"Alabama for Kansas—North of 36° 30'."* Was Buford's column the advance of a massive southern thrust against Kansas? Was actual war about to commence? (*To be continued in the November issue of* THE AMERICAN WEST.)

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THE GHOST DANCE

Some reflections, with evidence, on a cult of despair among the Indians of North America.

BY JOHN GREENWAY

WHEN HOPE HAS BEEN ERODED among a long-oppressed people, there occurs one of the strangest manifestations of polygenesis the study of man produces. This phenomenon has been variously named, though none of the names is wholly satisfactory: the nativistic endeavor, the messianic complex, the despair cult, the revitalization movement, the cargo cult. Uncannily, it takes the same form, wherever it appears.

When one culture is threatened with extinction, going down to defeat before the forcible encroachment of another, superior civilization, when all reasonable hope has vanished, unreasonable hope appears—usually among the poorest, most degraded elements of the harried society. It appears in the person of a shaman, even when the culture is dominated by an organized, advanced religion. His nature is often disguised in the honorific title of "prophet," but whatever the title, a shaman he always is.

The shaman has a vision, or imagines, that he has actually been taken up (or down) into the spiritual world, where he meets God, Jesus (where the religion of the superior culture is Christianity), the Master of Life, an aboriginal god (one Amazonian nativistic shaman claimed to be a descendant of the Inca Atahuallpa on the one side and of Jesus on the other), or some recognized high diety. God tells the shaman that He is fed up with the way the world is going, and that He has chosen the people of the prophet (the shaman) to undertake management of the world. He warns that it is not an easy responsibility and requires that the people signify their willingness to be custodians of the new world by dancing a sacred dance or participating in some ritual of acceptance. When the shaman returns to earth and communicates this message of the millennium to his people, the expected, reasonable reaction almost always occurs: he is told to go away and stop bothering sane people, he is ridiculed, or he is turned over to Pontius Pilate or the Indian agent—unless the shaman brings some evidence of the truth of what he says. Tenskwatawa, the Shawnee prophet, got wind of an impending solar eclipse from the whites; he then threatened to take the sun out of the sky if his people did not believe his message. They did not believe, so he took the sun out of the sky.

But more than mere proof is needed; the implementation of the movement must be provided for. The provider can be called a "St. Paul," after the most famous example of the type. The "St. Paul" is a man who is associated with the shaman, his religion, or the dominant religion, but whose faith in his own efforts is stronger than his faith in the spirits. He is often an unscrupulous opportunist, eager to cast the truth as the shaman sees it into a more effective means of achieving the millennium. If this St. Paul has the necessary personal qualities, he can turn the nativistic endeavor into a military

movement to smooth the path of the prophet. But another kind of obstacle usually puts an end to the idea and the action: the dominant culture retaliates violently, kills the prophet and his St. Paul with as many followers as it is practicable to kill, and life goes on until another prophet appears.

The history of religion is full of examples. In fact, it can be argued that every religion begins with a nativistic endeavor. The most persistent example is Judaism, which has been going continuously since 722 B.C, when the Jews were conquered and dispersed by Nineveh, and subsequently recharged with religious fervor by innumerable lesser shamans throughout history. (All the Old Testament prophets were endeavor leaders.) In a strong and lasting nativistic movement, other despair cults are spinned off. Thus Judaism produced Christianity, and Christianity produced Islam, as well as all the sects of Protestantism which is producing now civil rights movements like the Black Muslims which are producing their own nativistic heresies. And there are the Flagellants, the Quakers, the Shakers, the Ranters, the Jumpers, the Methodists, the Wilderness Worshippers, the Pillar of Fire cults, the Burning Bushers, the British Israelites, the Fifth Monarchy Men, the cargo cults of the southwestern Pacific islands, and the Odoru Shukyo, or Dancing Religion (which was founded in Japan after World War II and still has a following of 350,000 there as well as some 30,000 in thirty-two other countries).

Often the nativistic endeavor must compete with other messianic movements in its own time, and in these situations natural selection favors the strongest and most ruthless. Christianity won out over a confusion of other proletarian rebellions as the Roman Empire began to crack: Mithraism, for example, which gave Christianity much of its early mythology, and the Essenes, who were Christians before Christ.

Often, the St. Pauls are better remembered than the instituting prophet. We do not know the name of the "Delaware Prophet" who set the frontier afire in 1762, but we memorialize his assistant's name by putting it on the hood of thousands of automobiles—Pontiac. Infrequently, the prophet is his own St. Paul, the most notable example being Joan of Arc.

Nativistic endeavors among the American Indians produced at least three United States presidents. In 1805 the Shawnee prophet, Tenskwatawa, used his brother for his St. Paul—a handsome paragon of Indian virtues, Tecumseh. Tecumseh tried to unite all the Indians from Canada to Florida to overthrow the white man, but was defeated by William Henry Harrison in 1811. In 1835, when the Whigs were reduced to looking under flat, wet rocks for suitable candidates to oppose the Jacksonians, someone thought of old General Harrison. The Democrats ridiculed Harrison as fit only to sit on the porch of his log cabin, swigging cider. The Whigs replied by making log cabins and cider the basis of their campaign, and Harrison was elected. He had mercy upon his nation and died a month after assuming office, and John Tyler assumed the office of the presidency. Later in the century, when presidential candidates were similarly undistinguished, Benjamin Harrison was elected largely because his grandfather had been President.

But the most important of the scores of known American Indian despair cults was the Ghost Dance. Like the Essenic movement that anticipated Christianity, a Ghost Dance sprang up in 1870 among the humble Paviotso, a subtribe of northern Utes, at Walker Lake in western Nevada. The prophet of this first Ghost Dance has been arbitrarily identified as one Wodziwob. His efforts among the Paviotso burned out with the violent end put to the Modoc War in 1873, perhaps because Wodziwob made both of the fatal mistakes to which nativistic prophets are prone: first, he put a calendar date on the millennium, and secondly, he died without making provisions for his resurrection.

The Ghost Dance reappeared in 1889, when a shaman variously identified as Jack Wilson, Jackson Wilson, John Johnson, Big Rumbling Belly, Koitsow, Cowejo, Kwohitsauq, Wopokahte, Wevokar, and Wovoka arose, again among the Walker Lake Paviotso. This time there were competent ethnographers on the scene to record the origin and the evolution of the religion—among them James Mooney, Indian agent and anthropologist. When the news of the Messiah (as the prophet was called by the Indians: anthropologists have settled upon the name "Wovoka" for him) reached Mooney, who was then in Oklahoma, he hurried out to Nevada to interview him. When he arrived, he found that volunteer and appointive St. Pauls were streaming in from other tribes in all directions, getting the myth from the lips of the Messiah himself, and distorting it for their own purposes. The apostle Porcupine, mentioned in several of the following reports, was the source of the mythic change that made Wovoka a reincarnated Jesus Christ. But Mooney's report was impeccably accurate, and was repeated in the pages of the *Journal of American Folklore* in 1893 by its founding editor, William Wells Newell:

> From information just received from Mr. James Mooney, who has seen the Payute prophet in person, I present the following biographic facts, with reference to this personage.
>
> As near as can be ascertained, Jack Wilson is now (1893) thirty-five years old. He was called after the family name of David Wilson, the white farmer who brought him up in Mason Valley, Nevada, after the demise of his father. In the same valley, about thirty miles from the capital, Carson, he resides now. His stature nearly reaches six feet, which is more than the native Payute generally attains, and this magnitude of bodily proportions may have contributed to his success. He is a *full-blood* Indian and was married in his twentieth year, no other language but Payute is spoken by him, and he is but imperfectly acquainted with English. There is no doubt that his religious teachings rest on a well-ordained religious system, and, in spite of the numerous false reports that are spread about him, he does not claim to be either God or Jesus Christ, the Messiah, or any divine, superhuman being whatever. "I am the annunciator of God's message from the spiritual world and a prophet for the Indian people," is the way he defines the scope of his work among men. The first revelation he received of God himself took place about four years

ago, after he had fallen asleep. God admonished him to work zealously among his fellow-men in promoting good morals and delegated special powers to him to this effect. Thus he considers himself a messenger of God appointed in a dream, and has, on that account, compared himself to St. John the Baptist. When he had that dream he thought himself to be in heaven.

The course of the Ghost Dance myth and its movement is documented satisfactorily in the selections from the *Journal* that follow, for Newell, like most of the magazine's early editors, had an interest in Indian folkways that amounted almost to an obsession, and a particular curiosity about the Ghost Dance. Well he might, for tribe after tribe caught the fire of the Ghost Dance; only those tribes that had a good reason for rejecting it, did so. The Navaho, for example, would have nothing to do with it because the primary prophecy of the Messiah was the return of all dead Indians—and the Navaho dislike dead folks the way they dislike fish

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REPORT OF AN INDIAN VISIT
TO JACK WILSON, THE PAYUTE MESSIAH

WHAT STANDS BELOW is an authentic report of three Cheyenne Indians of the Tongue River Reservation, Montana, of what they saw and heard in the presence of the reputed Indian Messiah. Their names are Porcupine, Big Beaver, and Ridge Walker, and apparently faith or curiosity impelled them to see personally the religious leader, who enjoys great popularity among the different Western tribes, and preaches only in his native language, the Payute. They met him, as the report states, at Walker Lake, Nevada, in the autumn of 1890. The relation of an Arapaho Indian, Sage, especially prompted them to visit the divine man.

After returning home to the Tongue River Reservation, Montana, they met there Abe Somers, a Cheyenne Indian educated at the Carlisle Training School, Pennsylvania, and recounted to him their experiences on that trip. By chance Abe Somers came to Lawrence, in northeastern Kansas, in February, 1891, met there Henry Dawson North, a young Arapaho Indian then following an educational course at the Indian School of Lawrence, and gave him a circumstantial relation of what the three Cheyenne Indians had told him. North wrote down their words on the spot, and in the report given below they are reproduced verbatim from the Cheyenne language, North being equally familiar with Arapaho and Cheyenne. . . .

Abe Somers himself is doubtful concerning the divine mission of Jack Wilson, as our readers may themselves gather from his report, which is here given *in extenso:*

Dear Friends—one and all. Don't force your and others' minds on this letter, but resist it and keep your minds from it. I simply want to tell you just what I learned from Mr. Porcupine, Big Beaver, and I am sorry to say from one of them, a cousin of mine, Ridge Walker, son of Beaver Claws. I expect many of you are wishing to know, and perhaps many of you have already heard about it. I have met them face to face, and have questioned them personally when I met them; and so I learned from them some of their Messiah ideas. I try to make an account of just what I have learned from these three persons.

In the fall of the year 1890, they say, they first heard of this new Christ, at the Arapaho and Shoshone Agency, Wyoming Territory. When they and other Cheyennes of Tongue River went on a visit to said tribes in the autumn of 1890, an Arapaho Indian named Sage, who had been to the southwestern country in 1888, told them that a new Christ had arisen for the Indians; he said where he could be found and explained his doctrine to them. Farther on, Porcupine said that he and the other Cheyennes were much interested, and determined to see the Messiah, but as all could not go so far, nine of these Cheyennes were sent back to Tongue River Agency to tell the people what they had heard. Porcupine and several of the Cheyennes went on. When they arrived in Utah, they received large accessions to their caravan, Indians joining them en route *at the different points, and so at last their meeting took place at Walker Lake, to hear the new Christ speak. There were many people present, including women and children.*

Then Mr. Porcupine says to the Messiah: "I and my people have been living in ignorance until I went and found out the truth." He [the Messiah] sat with his head bowed all the time, and after a while he arose and said he was very glad to see his children: "I have sent for you and I am glad that you have come, and I am going to talk to you after a while about our relations who are dead and gone. My children, I want you to listen to all I have to say, and I will teach you how to dance a dance, and I want you to dance it; get ready for the dance, and then when the dance is over I will talk to you."

He was dressed in a white coat with stripes; the rest of his dress was that of a white man's, except that he had on a pair of moccasins. And then we commenced to dance, everybody joining in with the Christ, singing while we danced. We danced till late in the night, and he said we had danced enough. And in the morning after breakfast we went in the circle and spread grass over it on the ground, the Christ standing in the midst of us, and told us that he was going away on that day and that he would be back next morning and talk to us.

In the night, when I first saw him I thought he was an Indian; but the next day, when I could see him better, he looked different; he was not so dark as an Indian, nor so light as a white man. He had no beard or whiskers, but very heavy eyebrows; he was a good-looking man, and we were crowded up very close.

We had been told that nobody was to talk, and even if a thing was whispered, the Christ would know it. I heard that Christ had been crucified, and I looked to see, and I saw a

scar on his wrist and one on his face and he seemed to be the man. I could not see his feet

He would talk to us all day. On that evening we were all assembled again to part with him. When we assembled he began to sing, and he commenced to tremble all over violently for a while, and then sat down; and we danced on all that night, the Christ lying beside us apparently dead. The next morning we went to our breakfast; the Christ was with us again. After breakfast four heralds went around and called out that the Christ was back with us, and wanted to talk with us; and so the circle was made again; they assembled and Christ came amongst them and sat down. He said they were to listen to him while he talked to us. "I am the man who made everything you see around you. I am not lying to my children. I made this earth and everything on it. I have been to Heaven and seen your dead friends, and seen my father and mother. In the beginning, after God made the earth, they sent me back to teach the people; and when I came back on the earth, the people were afraid of me and treated me badly. This is what they have done to me [showing his scars]. I did not try to defend myself, and I found my children were bad so I went back to Heaven and left them; and in so many years I would come back and see to my children, and at the end of this time I was sent back to teach them. My father told me that the earth is getting old and worn out, and the people getting bad, and that I was to renew everything as it used to be, and make it better." And he said all our dead were to be resurrected and they were all to come back to the earth, and that the earth was too small for them and us; he would do away with heaven and make the earth large enough to contain us all, and that we must tell all the people we meet about these things

After the final agony of Wounded Knee in December, 1890, the Army began to round up "hostile" Sioux for incarceration on various reservations. The scene above, photographed in January, 1891, near Pine Ridge, South Dakota, was described by the photographer as "the largest hostile Indian camp in the United States."

He spoke to us about fighting, and said that was bad and we must keep from it; that the earth was to be all good hereafter; that we must be friends with one another. He said that in the fall of the year the youth of all the good people would be renewed, so that nobody would be more than forty years old. The youth of every one would be renewed in the spring. He said if we were all good he would send people among us who could heal all our wounds and sickness by mere touch, and that we could live forever.

This is what I have witnessed, and many other things wonderful which I cannot describe. Please don't follow the ideas of that man. He is not the Christ. No man in the world can see God at any time. Even the angels of God cannot.

ACCOUNT OF THE NORTHERN CHEYENNES CONCERNING THE MESSIAH

MR. GEORGE BIRD GRINNELL, editor of *Forest and Stream* (New York), a person thoroughly familiar with Indian customs, and himself by adoption a member of the Blackfeet tribe, while at Fort Keogh, in the autumn of 1890, had an opportunity to learn from the chiefs of the Northern Cheyennes their version of the origin and spread of the superstition. A statement of Mr. Grinnell's experience as given in an interview published in the *New York Tribune*, November 23, 1890, is given substantially as follows according to the author's revision:

I spent several days at Fort Keogh, living in a camp of Cheyenne scouts employed by the government. While there I saw and talked with two of the principal chiefs of the Northern Cheyenne tribe, Two Moons, the war chief, and White Bull, the peace chief. Both of these chiefs talked with me very freely about the spread of the religious superstition among the Indians concerning the new Messiah. Both of them felt very anxious, for they feared that the excitement might lead to an outbreak. They told me, what I had already known, that this supposed Messiah had predicted certain special events to come off in September, and when these failed to happen the Northern Cheyennes lost faith in the new doctrine. But shortly after the failure of the prophecies, some Shoshones and Arapahos came over from Fort Washakie to visit the Cheyenne agency, and when they got to the Cheyenne camp they reported that while travelling along on the prairie they had met with a party of Indians who had been dead thirty or forty years, and who had been resurrected by the Messiah. Since their resurrection, the formerly dead Indians, so the visitors said, had been going about just like the other Indians who had never died.

This started up the excitement again, and all the Indians at the agency began to dance. . . .

I never heard of the dance of the Indians called the "Ghost Dance" until I returned to the East. In the Indian country it is known as the "Dance to Christ." The Southern Cheyennes and the Southern Arapahos were among those by whom I saw it danced. The Indians believe that the more they dance, the sooner the Christ will come. The dance usually lasts for four nights, beginning a little before sundown and continuing until any hour the next morning. The Indians, men, women, and children, form a circle, probably one hundred feet in diameter, standing shoulder to shoulder, close together. All, of course, face inward. Several men take their places in the circle and start the dance by singing a song in the Arapaho tongue. They move slowly to the left, one foot at a time, keeping in unison with the music. The scene is extremely weird when the moon is up. The Indians clad in white sheets look like so many ghosts. Their rapt and determined faces show how earnest they are. The hoarse, deep voices of the men and the shriller notes of the women mingle in a kind of rude harmony. They sing exactly together and their dancing is in perfect time to the music of the song. As I beheld it, the scene was one to thrill the looker-on.

At intervals of a few notes particular emphasis is given, and the note so emphasized is the signal to move the left foot to the left. So the circle moves around, quaint shadows playing on the turf both in and out of the circle of the dance. Frequently a few of those sitting outside the circle step into it to dance, while those who have been dancing may stop to rest. They move their heads and bodies very little, but step to the left in time with the music, so long as the song is kept up. At intervals, all in the circle sit down to rest and smoke. . . .

In answer to further inquiries, Mr. Grinnell informs the editor that during the autumn of 1890 he spent some time among the Southern Cheyennes, and that when he was in their camp he saw Sitting Bull the Arapaho, who asserts that he is the chief prophet of the new religion. Mr. Grinnell has sent a fuller account of his observations among the Northern and Southern Cheyennes, written in November, 1890:

Although the tribes in the Indian Territory believe that the Christ appeared to the Indians in the north, the truth is that the more northern tribes know nothing about the new religion. About the Blackfeet, Assiniboines, Gros Ventres of the Prairie, Rees, Mandans, and Gros Ventres of the Village, I can speak with great confidence, for within two months I have seen and talked with men of all these tribes. But as soon as one gets south of the Northern Pacific Railroad he begins to hear, if he goes into an Indian camp, whispers of the coming of the Messiah, or the women and children singing the songs of the worship dances. The Northern Cheyennes are interested believers in the coming of this Christ. All, or almost all, the bands of the Missouri River Sioux believe in him; so do the Shoshones, the Arapahos, north and south, the Kiowas, Comanches, Wichitas, Caddoes, and many other smaller tribes. All the above-mentioned tribes hold the worship dances. The Pawnees, Poncas, Otoes, and Missourias have

heard of the Messiah and believe in him, but they have not yet generally taken up the dances.

With the Northern Cheyennes, the dance differs in one or two details from that practised among the southern section of this tribe. Among the Northern Cheyennes, four fires are built outside of the circle of the dance, one fire toward each of the cardinal points. These fires stand about twenty yards back from the circle, and are built of long poles or logs, set up on end so as to form a rough cone, much as the poles of a lodge are set up. The fires are lighted at the bottom and make high bonfires, which are kept up so long as the dance continues.

One of the cardinal points of faith of this religion is that those who are dead will all be raised and will again live upon the earth with their people. Sometimes during a dance a man who has been in a trance will revive, and may rise to his feet and shout in a loud voice that he sees about him certain people who have long been dead. He will call these risen dead by name and say that he sees them standing or sitting near certain of the people who are looking on, mentioning the names of the latter. The people believe that he sees these long-dead people, and are frightened to know that they are close to them. It is not quite clear whether the living regard these persons whom they cannot see as actually resurrected but invisible, or as ghosts. As nearly as I can gather by talking with the Indians, they think them ghosts.

In connection with these dances what are regarded as miracles are not infrequently performed. For example, the other night one of the prophets announced that a number of persons long dead had arisen from the grave and had come to visit him. They had brought him, he said, a piece of buffalo meat, and that night the people should again taste their old-time food. After the dance was over this man appeared in the ring holding in his hands a small wooden dish full of meat. He called up to him the dancers, one hundred or more, one by one, and gave to each a small piece of meat out of the dish. After all had been supplied the dish appeared to be still half full.

Wovoka, otherwise known as Jack Wilson, who maintained until the day of his death the divinity of his mission.

It seems evident, in a general way, that the Indian Messianic excitement is the result of a combination of primitive beliefs and introduced Christian conceptions; but the task of giving a correct account of the origin, progress, and varieties of the movement is likely to be attended with much difficulty, and to illustrate the obstacles encountered by any person who undertakes, even under the most favorable circumstances, to write history; while, with regard to the relation of the original Indian ideas and dances to those now developed, the most divergent opposite views exist.

In the November 26, 1890, Essex County *Mercury* of Salem, Massachusetts, Mrs. James A. Finley, wife of the post trader at Wounded Knee Creek, South Dakota, gave her own account of the ritual: "The Indians lose all their senses in the dance. They think they are animals. Some get down on all fours and bob about like buffaloes. When they cannot lose their senses from exhaustion, they butt their heads together, beat them upon the ground, and do anything to become insensible, so that they may be ushered into the presence of the new Christ. . . ."

"This lady is of the opinion," the *Mercury* noted, "that if the government lets them alone there will be no need of troops; they will kill themselves dancing."

As it turned out, the government did not leave the Indians to kill themselves. Frightened Indian agents at Wounded Knee Creek called in troopers of the Seventh Cavalry (who remembered well the battle of the Little Big Horn), and on December 29, 1890, batteries of rapid-fire Hotchkiss guns cut down Indian men, women, and children indiscriminately. The number of killed has been wildly estimated from a little over a hundred to more than three hundred; whatever the precise figure, it was enough. That massacre put an end to the Ghost Dance and proved that all the idealists are wrong when they insist that bullets and bombs cannot kill ideas. The last that was heard of Wovoka the Messiah was that he had sold himself as a sideshow attraction at the Midwinter Fair in San Francisco in 1894.

John Greenway, *a frequent contributor to* The American West, *is an anthropologist at the University of Colorado, former editor of* The Journal of American Folklore, *and author of* Folklore of the Great West, *to be published by the American West Publishing Company in September of this year.*

CONQUEST OF THE COLORADO

Continued from page 9

boxes for pouring. On June 6, 1933, the first bucket skimmed down out of the sky and dumped its viscous load in a box, where waiting men immediately began tamping it down in preparation for the next bucket. For the next twenty-two months the buckets came swinging down to the dam, one almost every minute, as the boxes rose higher and higher in the canyon toward completion.

While Frank Crowe and Charlie Shea with their small army of workers watched the canyon walls fill, Henry Kaiser was proving his own worth to the project in a way that none of the partners had expected—as emissary to a somewhat difficult Washington. Early in the construction work, it became obvious that Congress, in its wisdom, had failed to appropriate enough money to keep the work going, so Kaiser journeyed to Washington and managed to lobby through a deficiency appropriation to take up the slack. Later he found himself facing the "terrible-tempered Harold L. Ickes," the New Deal's Secretary of the Interior, who charged the Six Companies with no less than seventy thousand individual violations of the eight-hour-day law. This law required government contractors not to resort to overtime except in emergencies, a device designed to spread the work around in this period of depression. Kaiser's contention that Boulder Dam was a "continuous emergency" was looked upon skeptically by Ickes, who fined the company $350,000. Kaiser was up to the challenge; he hired a press agent to put together a crisis-filled narrative entitled **So Boulder Dam Was Built** and mailed thousands of copies to congressmen and government officials; he went on the radio and invited newspaper interviews to relate how the project's immense obstacles had been overcome, painfully, one by one; he finally entered into active negotiations with the Department of the Interior, and when done had whittled the fine down to $100,000.

But Kaiser's most impressive coup, from the viewpoint of the Six Companies, was in persuading the government that the dam was finished when the Six Companies **said** it was finished. As Felix Kahn later explained: "It's one thing to build a great public work; it's something else to get a government bureau to admit it's finished. Unless you can saw the main job off at a reasonable point, they'll have you adding power equipment, transmission lines, roads, and other extras the rest of your life."

The last bucket of concrete was poured on March 23, 1935; following that, a pure cement mixture was pumped by force into the spaces remaining between the forms until every open crack and cranny of the dam was filled. Already, the diversion tunnels had been plugged to allow the river to start filling up behind the dam, and the diversion works were complete—including four 395-foot intake towers on either side of the river, the great penstocks that would deliver water from them to the powerhouse, and the two spillways and their tunnels on either side of the dam. By early fall the U-shaped powerhouse (each of its wings as long as a city block and as tall as a twenty-story building) was finished, and, Crowe was ready to "saw the job off." On September 30, the dam was dedicated before twelve thousand spectators by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Five months later, Kaiser managed to convince the Department of the Interior that the obligation of the Six Companies was fulfilled, and the government took over operation of the dam and all its works.

Four of the principals involved in making Boulder Dam a reality were dead: Arthur Powell Davis, the former Bureau of Reclamation chief who had been instrumental in the dam's authorization, died in 1933, W. H. Wattis died six months after the Six Companies had won the contract; his brother, E. O. Wattis, died in 1934; and "Dad" Bechtel died in 1933 while on a trip to the Soviet Union. In addition, 110 of the thousands of men whose muscle and sweat had brought the dam to creation had died in the act, some by heat exhaustion and heart attacks, some by drowning, some by falls, and some, so rumor would have it, by being buried alive in the very body of the dam they had helped to build.

But the Six Companies had won a great prize: a profit of ten million four hundred thousand dollars, prorated according to the capital contributions of the partners. Frank Crowe's share, besides a relatively modest salary for the five years' work, was three hundred thousand dollars. The Six Companies held together for another six years, going on to build Parker Dam, Bonneville Dam and power plant on the Columbia River, Grand Coulee Dam on the same river, and the great piers for the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge; and Frank Crowe himself would build Shasta Dam in California. But nothing, it is safe to say, would remain in their memories with the same fervency as the **massif** of Boulder Dam. "There's something peculiarly satisfying about building a great dam," Frank Crowe observed. "You know that what you build will stand for centuries." And Boulder Dam was not just a great dam—it was the greatest dam in history.

Even as the concrete blocks of Boulder Dam were climbing in the canyon of the Colorado, work on the second and third phases of the Colorado River Project had begun, and their completion followed close behind that of the great dam itself. Parker Dam, to hold water for the Colorado River Aqueduct, became the Six Company's second job, and it was completed in 1938. The Aqueduct itself, under the supervision of the M. W. D.'s Frank Weymouth, was completed by 1939. The Imperial Dam, to store and desilt water for the 80-mile All-American Canal, was completed in 1938, and the canal in 1940. On October 13, 1940, the first water from the Colorado River reached the Imperial Valley farmlands, in the spring of 1941, the Colorado's water was delivered to the communities of the Metropolitan Water District.

And so the great dream, the conquest of the Colorado, had finally come to pass, after men had schemed and planned for more than forty years to capture the river and make it their own. The completion of the Colorado River Project was more than the fulfillment of forty years of dreams, however, it was, in many respects, the technological culmination of an epoch, that strange, badly focused, and vaguely confusing period of the 1930's, an age that could celebrate with whole-souled gusto the spending of more than four hundred million dollars on the Colorado River in the middle of the most brutal depression in the history of America—and make heroes of the men who had spent it.

The age that followed it, neatly divided by the bloody convulsion of World War II and perhaps glutted by all the technological wonders of the war itself, could find little magic in dams, canals, reservoirs, and the like. The day of the earth-mover as one of the symbols and celebrations of the nation was diminished, if not gone forever. An ever growing circle of opinion even held that the earth-mover was a fool, a destroyer, a villain stupidly tampering with the environment in a way that would bring ruin to it and to the legacy of future generations—surely a concept almost incomprehensible to men who had once gloried in the assurance that they were the great builders and makers of America.

Which is not to say that the conquest of the Colorado stopped with the completion of the Colorado River Project. It had hardly begun, for the Bureau of Reclamation was in the business of building dams, and the concepts of fifty years were not easily altered. World War II had just ended, in fact, when the next addition to

(Continued on page 60)

THE AMERICAN WEST REVIEW

THE I.W.W.: More Sinned Against Than Sinning

By John L. Shover

Neither the inflamed reaction that the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) provoked during the years of its existence nor the nostalgic interest it has attracted since then can be explained by the visible accomplishments of the organization. Its membership was small and vacillating, its leadership in constant flux; and it never established, even at a local level, a single chapter that survived

Robert L. Tyler's *Rebels of the Woods* tells the tempestuous story of the "Wobblies" in the Pacific Northwest, the area of the United States where their impact was probably greatest. The IWW, the author argues, had about it the volatile, restless quality of the frontier. It made its most successful inroads in rough and tumble "pioneer" industries, like the logging camps of Washington and Oregon; its membership consisted disproportionately of itinerants, who wandered from job to job without obligation to home and family. The organization was more effective and enthusiastic in the confrontation tactics of "free speech" fights than in the routinized and less dramatic activities involved in establishing permanent labor organizations. And, in what would doubtless be a startling conclusion both to unreconciled old Wobblies and to the patriotic citizens of Centralia in 1919, Tyler finds that, at the core, both of them were reacting to the same thing. In essence, the Wobblies were aggrieved by the impersonality of the advancing industrial society, whose economic and political institutions exploited the working class. Ironically, the local politicians, small manufacturers, and rural sheriffs, reacting to their displacement by the same pervading forces, made the Wobblies scapegoats for their own status frustrations.

This is a tenuous framework for any explanation of the IWW phenomenon and the angry reaction it provoked. Reaction to industrialism is so inclusive a category (it is difficult to find any nineteenth- or twentieth-century reform or revolutionary movement that could not be included), that it explains nothing. To link the origins and fate of the Wobblies to the "frontier" qualities of the Northwest ignores the fact that radical associations of similar ideology and membership has arisen in other areas and other times (for instance, those of migratory farm workers in New Jersey and California in the 1930's). It ignores, too, the fact that persecution of alleged anarchist or Communist radicals has followed a distressingly parallel pattern whether in the Northwest, New England, or the American South.

Rebels of the Woods: The I.W.W. in the Pacific Northwest by Robert L. Tyler *(University of Oregon Books, Eugene, 1967; 230 pp., $7.50).*

The major concern of this book, however, is not to explain but to describe the controversies the IWW stirred in the Northwest. Some of the material is familiar, for example, the Centralia massacre of 1919, the Seattle general strike of the same year (where Wobbly influence was only incidental), and wartime prosecutions of IWW members. The most original contribution of the book is the detailed description of the 1917 timber workers' strike in Washington (the apex of the IWW's efforts), and the creation of the Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen under wartime government auspices as a company union to deflect the successes of the IWW. Much of the story is one of bitter and irrational persecution—greater than any the IWW prompted—in the name of law and order. Given the lynching of Wesley Evans at Centralia, numerous beatings of Wobbly prisoners, and the indiscriminate deportation proceedings carried out by the federal government during World War I, the conclusion is inescapable that, despite their truculent tactics, the IWW was more sinned against than sinning.

The author has researched prodigiously in sources often difficult to obtain; unfortunately, the book contains no bibliography or index to guide others through this rich material. The narrative is episodic and fragmented, but this reflects the tactics of the IWW, not the choice of the writer. Often, despite an abundance of proper names, the story seems devoid of personal participants; one might wish for more passages like that describing living conditions in a lumber camp circa 1910-1915 or the author's personal visit to the last IWW hall in Seattle. Considering that the narrative often has to transcend the Pacific Northwest to round out the history of the IWW in that area, one wonders why the author stopped at the Canadian border, leaving out the vigorous IWW efforts in British Columbia and the prairie provinces.

If we are to understand the IWW experience as a part of the history of American labor and radical movements, or if we are to understand the vigilantism that hounded the organization out of existence in terms of a recurring pattern of violence that seems to exist in American society, then we must seek different perspectives and we must ask more meaningful questions. Tyler's study, while illuminating, cannot stand as the last word.

John L. Shover *is in the History Department at the University of Pennsylvania*

A WESTERN GATHERING

Looking Westward

BY JOSEPH ILLICK

My Life with History: An Autobiography by John D. Hicks *(University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1968; preface, index, $5.95)*

AUTOBIOGRAPHY IS AN OLD AMERICAN art form. In colonial days, Massachusetts Puritans and even some Virginia gentlemen kept secret diaries which were chronicles of their struggles against worldliness, meant only for the eyes of God and the diarist. By the eighteenth century, however, when declining piety and Enlightenment ideas led away from a special relationship with the Almighty to a concern with the opinions of one's fellow man, it became acceptable to display one's accomplishments publicly. Benjamin Franklin, thought by some historians to have been the original American, set a pattern which borrowed heavily from the earlier diarists though Franklin's goal was not godliness. His autobiography was a didactic instrument, showing the way to earthly achievement. We have been writing these books ever since.

Perhaps as a reflection of our current concern with youth, several of the best recent autobiographies have been written by young men who have achieved early success. In *North Toward Home*, Mississippi-born Willie Morris tells of his rapid climb from Yazoo City to New York City as *Harper's* youngest editor. Norman Podhoretz describes an equally meteoric rise into the literary world of Manhattan from a Brooklyn slum by way of Columbia and Cambridge in *Making It*. As the latter title suggests, these books are usually (or unusually) frank, not to say sharp and witty

By comparison, John D. Hicks's *My Life with History*, published in the seventy-eighth year of a vigorous existence, is mellow with age, cautious with regard to personal matters, conventional in its observations. It is, appropriately, a voice from America's past. The difference is not simply stylistic nor even chronological, but regional. Having heard a record of Harvard's Samuel Eliot Morison reading "The Faith of an Historian," Professor Hicks was struck by "the contrast between Morison's eastern and urban background and my western and rural origin." Members of the Western History Association who attended the San Francisco meeting in 1967 will recall Professor Hicks's nostalgic re-creation of small-town America at the turn of the century. The theme is a recurrent one in his book, the writing of which caused him to reflect on his social as well as his academic experience and realize (not for the first time, no doubt) that the folkways of rural America were disappearing.

Professor Hicks believes that these rural mores must be recognized in order "to understand our urban present," but as one reads his detailed descriptions of the Methodist Church, farming, and the public schools of his youth in Missouri and Wyoming, it is difficult to see what light this sheds on the mid-twentieth-century metropolis, except by stark contrast

Those of us who came from the farm would like to think so, suppressing that embarrassing question of the responsibility for urban blight. Indeed, Professor Hicks's palliative for city dwelling is one that I must sheepishly say I approve of: retreat. He and his family regularly visit Dutch Flat, California, a small town he describes with a fondness that mothers reserve for children. As one of his colleagues wisely observed: "Yes, Hicks has come full circle. Born and brought up in a small town, he went away to college, won fame and fortune, saw the world, then wound up right where he started from."

About his success in his chosen profession, there can be no doubt. He has taught in the nation's best graduate schools, as well as Cambridge University. His college textbook *The American Nation* has been the best seller in its field, while *The Populist Revolt*, despite revisionist attacks, remains a seminal work. He has held a series of distinguished administrative positions. One can hardly take seriously his demur that this autobiography "is written by an ordinary individual." Yet in his ancestry (he describes his grandfather as "a typical product of the American frontier," — a fitting label for all his forebears) the most striking qualities appear to be strength and steadiness; there is no trace of genius or even eccentricity

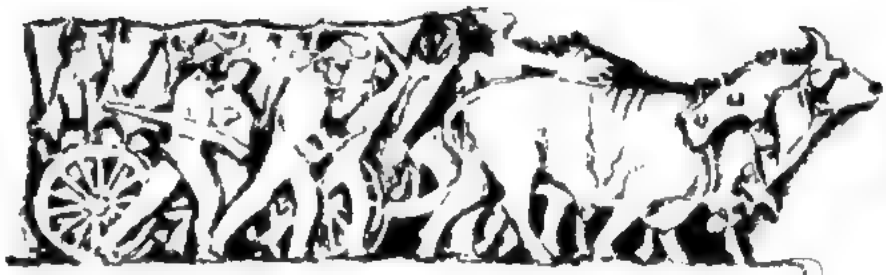
The plain style with which Professor Hicks writes and the restraint with which he discusses all matters reflect his heritage and, unfortunately, invest his book with something of a methodical character. But that, after all, is what the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were about. Professor Hicks *is* the inner-directed man described by David Riesman in *The Lonely Crowd*. After the candor of Benjamin Franklin and before the frank self-revelation of our own time, there was a period when men kept their own counsel. Their strength was security, their ethic was work, and their happiness was accomplishment. And they might look backward and tersely sum it all up, as Professor Hicks does: "I think I have had a good life." ☙

The American Southwest: An Overview

BY DAVID J. WEBER

Land of Many Frontiers: A History of the American Southwest by Odie B Faulk *(Oxford University Press, New York, 1968; 358 pp., intro., biblio., index, $7.50)*.

IN RECENT YEARS Lynn Perrigo and W. Eugene Hollon have published surveys of the history of the Southwest. Now, building on these works and employing his own wide-ranging scholarship, Odie Faulk has given us the most satisfying synthesis to date. *Land of*



Following the Frontier Westward

A NATION MOVING WEST:
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Many Frontiers combines a smooth narrative with remarkable comprehensiveness.

Defining the Southwest differently than did his predecessors, Faulk draws an arc from Santa Barbara, California, to Corpus Christi, Texas (Texans may prefer to draw it in the other direction), including all of Arizona and New Mexico and the southern portions of Nevada, Utah, and Colorado. Thus, unlike Perrigo, Faulk omits Northern California and East Texas, and unlike Hollon (who omitted all of California), he ignores Oklahoma. Faulk's definition of the region is as good as any, but he does not trouble himself with a detailed justification of it. Instead, his facile, all-embracing narrative provides a unity to the area which makes one forget to ask if it is a region at all. From the Spanish period to the present, with the nineteenth century receiving the most detailed coverage, Faulk seeks broad patterns and relationships, and tries to avoid writing histories of regions within the region.

Although any reader might wish that this or that favorite subject had been developed more fully, Faulk slights two topics of particular importance: Indians and Mexican-Americans, each of whom continue to contribute significantly to the Southwest's regional distinctiveness. Faulk's story begins with Cabeza de Vaca's landing on the coast of Texas, an event which "marked the true beginning of southwestern history." Pre-Hispanic civilizations, then, are ignored; even post-Hispanic Indian civilization receives scant attention. We never learn, for example, of the scope or stage of development of Pueblo culture, and are given no clue that these people developed differently from other aborigines. This approach not only slights the rich heritage of a significant number of Southwestern tribes, but also makes European responses to various Indian groups less comprehensible. Although Faulk discusses our "Spanish heritage" and provides a fine survey of the Southwest's Mexican period, we lose sight of Mexicans once the American conquest has ended. What happened to Mexicans who remained in the United States? How did the Anglo-American come to dominate them economically, politically, and socially during the last half of the nineteenth century? Faulk's bibliography includes recent studies by Leonard Pitt and Howard R. Lamar that are directed toward these questions, but he does not introduce their findings into his own narrative.

Defects notwithstanding, Faulk's graceful and often insightful overview of the Southwest's past deserves the wide reading that it will receive. Hopefully, it might even find its way into the hands of those southwesterners whom Faulk condemns for "aping the manners, customs, and dress of easterners," and for failing "to appreciate their historical heritage." ✪

David J. Weber *is in the Department of History, San Diego State College*

The Urban Texans

BY GUNTHER BARTH

To Wear a City's Crown: The Beginnings of Urban Growth in Texas, 1836-1865 by Kenneth W. Wheeler *(Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1968; 215 pp., biblio., notes, index, $6.95)*

THE YEARS BETWEEN the independence of Texas and the end of the Civil War saw the transformation of San Antonio from a century-old Spanish-Mexican outpost to the largest city in Texas (with 8,000 people) and the emergence of Galveston (7,000), Houston (5,000), and Austin (3,500) as other centers of urbanization. This period provides Kenneth W. Wheeler with a framework in which to describe the rise of towns in Texas as reflected in the development of the two ports, Galveston and Houston, and the two inland cities, San Antonio and Austin. While commenting briefly on the widespread speculation in town sites and the development of communities spawned by independence and immigration — all of which tripled the population of the Republic — he concentrates on these four cities because they came to dominate the early history of the state as centers of population, commerce, government, culture, and industry.

The study stresses the role of transportation and commerce in shaping the fluctuating fortunes of the struggling communities. It depicts in particular the rivalry between Galveston and Houston to dominate coastal communication. Galveston's failure to control transportation by road, water, and rail presaged the decline of its position as the "New York of Texas." Houston, in turn, was able to establish its own contact with ocean-going vessels and to capture the coastal rail network while maintaining its hold on the inland trade.

Little money went into manufacturing in proportion to the capital tied up in the marketing of cotton and sugar, the major cash crops flowing through Galveston and Houston; in wool, the third largest agricultural export, handled largely in San Antonio; or in slaves. The discrepancy between the areas of investment not only illuminates the extent to which commerce, rather than agriculture or industry, dominated the affairs of the coastal towns, but also explains the fierce competition between the four cities

This clearly-written book throws light on a phase of urban growth in the United States which up to now had to be pieced together from investigations of specific areas or aspects, such as the book by Ray F. Broussard, *San Antonio during the Texas Republic: A City in Transition* (El Paso, 1967), mentioned here since it evidently appeared after the completion of Professor Wheeler's manuscript. The merits of the study lie in the author's attempt to explain the rise of cities in Texas by asking a set of questions which differentiate the four communities and identify their roles in the process of urbanization. While the investigation enhances our awareness of the variety of urban experiences in Texas, it does not furnish a synthesis sufficiently strong or imaginative to penetrate the extensive descriptive portions of the slender book with analytical insight spelling out the promised "urban pattern." The discussion of daily life in the towns, despite all details, remains a tableau of ethnic, racial, and economic groups, scratching the surface of the social milieu, without coming to grips with the essential element of these cities—their people.

Gunther Barth, *author of* Bitter Strength, *is in the Department of History, University of California, Berkeley.*

ALMOST ANCESTORS

The First Californians

By *Theodora Kroeber* and *Robert F. Heizer*

The Sierra Club, by publishing ALMOST ANCESTORS, The First Californians, has made a great contribution to the interpretation of the California Indian and to a more general awareness of the rich human qualities and strength of the first Californians

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The Study of American Folklore by Jan Harold Brunvand *(W. W. Norton Co., New York, 1968; 383 pp., illus., $5.95).*

By John Greenway

A few years ago, when the discovery of the Australopithecines definitely established these fossils in our evolutionary history, the French satirical novelist Vercors wondered how we would behave toward the man-apes if some were found to be still alive. In the course of his delightful examination of this hypothetical embarrassment, *You Shall Know Them* (paperback edition titled *The Murder of the Missing Link*), Vercors made the startling point that in no legal code on earth is there a definition of *human being*. And why should there be? Everybody knows what a human being is.

Everybody knows what folklore is. Perhaps that is why, after more than a century and a quarter, during which the material of folklore has been studied under that name, the best folklorists in the United States argue every year at the annual meeting of the American Folklore Society which of the twenty-one definitions in their standard reference work is least wrong.

We cannot even infer from its use what folklore is. The Old Stone Age Australian aborigines use it to remember the locations of waterholes. Citizens of moribund nations kept alive only by the disinterest of the superstates—Ireland, Finland, and France, to offend only three—pour large amounts from their small treasuries into the preservation of folklore under the comfortable delusion that past romance makes present viability. But subjects of emergent African nations destroy folklore for the same reason. Soviet Russia encourages the singing manifestation of folklore in the United States as a useful agitprop activity. Americans themselves cultivate their folklore principally to satisfy social nostalgia, a metatactic toy to play with.

Jan Harold Brunvand tells what it is all about in this excellent book. It is what I expected of him as one of the few in his generation whom I in my generation can respect and trust. He is competent, conscientious, and careful. His book is easily the best introduction to the study of American folklore ever written. I wish I had written it. Every accepted component of American folklore is considered with unflagging readability — proverbs and proverbial phrases; riddles and other verbal phrases, rhymes and poetry; song, ballads, and music; superstitions, myth, and legends; customs and festivals; dances and dramas; games, gestures, architecture, handicrafts, art, costumes, and foods. It analyzes and illustrates the most ancient material made by the first folk in this land of infinite folk diversity, yet comes close enough to the present to define a gasoline siphon hose as a "Mexican credit card." ☙

John Greenway *is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Colorado*

Joshua Pilcher: Fur Trader and Indian Agent by John E. Sunder *(University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1968; 199 pp., biblio, $5.95).*

By Richard Batman

Joshua Pilcher is little known by western historians. Yet a list of his friends and acquaintances — Thomas Hart Benton, William Clark, Stephen Austin, George Simpson, Prince Maximilian, William Drummond Stewart — reads like a *Who's Who* of the American West. Furthermore, Pilcher traveled with fur trappers over much of the West—up the Missouri, to the Rocky Mountains, and even into the British areas of Oregon and northern Canada.

On the surface Pilcher would seem to be just another romantic, hardy western fur trader. John Sunder, however, has deemphasized this part of Pilcher's life and the man he writes about is representative of something far different. The Joshua Pilcher of this book is not so much the rugged frontiersman as the ambitious small businessman. His career in the West began when he arrived in St. Louis and invested in a dry goods store, then in an auction house, and finally in the fur trade. It was only after this latter business began to fail that Pilcher made his western trips in an attempt to stave off financial disaster.

Like many another small businessman, Pilcher then turned to political patronage to recoup his fortunes. He apparently backed John Quincy Adams in 1824, but successfully made the shift to Andrew Jackson four years later. During the Jackson and Van Buren administrations he was given various federal appointments and eventually became Indian superintendent at St. Louis on the death of William Clark. This, too, ended in

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failure, for in 1840 Pilcher backed a loser in the presidential campaign, and when the new president took office Pilcher was removed.

John Sunder has chosen to depict a member of the fur trade who worries more about the red ink in his account books than about Indian signs, and more about getting his candidate elected than about setting a beaver trap. Sunder's sources, which he uses excellently, bear out this portrayal.

Yet one problem still remains. Joshua Pilcher, besides being an archetype of the harried little businessman who tried to use the fur trade as the road to fame and fortune, was also a human being. And unfortunately it is only a type representative, not a recognizable human being that emerges from the pages of this short biography.

Richard Batman *is Assistant Professor of History at San Francisco State College.*

Life of George Bent: Written from his Letters by George E. Hyde, edited by Savoie Lottinville *(University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1968; 389 pp., illus., notes, biblio., index, $5.95)*

Bostonians and Bullion: The Journal of Robert Livermore, 1892-1915, edited by Gene M. Gressley *(University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1968; 193 pp., illus., maps, intro., epilogue, $6.95)*

Montana Adventure: The Recollections of Frank B. Linderman, edited by Harold G. Merriam *(University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1968; notes, biblio., index, $5.95).*

By Jerald Combs

A Life of George Bent is a magnificent and tragic tale of the Cheyenne Indians as they camped, traded, suffered, fought, and parlayed with their fellow Plains tribes and with the white invaders. George Bent's father was the white founder of Bent's Fort; his mother was Owl Woman, a Cheyenne Indian. When the Cheyennes and the whites went to war in the 1860's, George Bent took the side of the Indians. As interpreter and warrior, he personally witnessed many of the important events of that period. He was also in a position to hear of other episodes from those of his brothers who took part in them. Bent recorded these events in a series of letters to George Hyde, who has now made them available to the public in the form of this book. Bent's reminiscences are one of the few sources concerning the Plains Indians which are drawn from the Indians themselves rather than from white observers. As such they are invaluable for the western history specialist and fascinating reading for the layman.

The recollections of Robert Livermore and Frank Linderman are neither so majestic nor so important as those of George Bent, but they are entertaining and informative. Both Livermore and Linderman arrived in the West just as it was fading into the sunset of mundane small-town American civilization. Livermore was a mining engineer who shipped aboard one of the last wooden sailing frigates, cowboyed on one of the last open ranges in Wyoming, and worked the mines of one of the last big gold mining districts in the United States, the Cripple Creek–Telluride area of Colorado. During his off hours he engaged in mine-hunting expeditions in Nevada and Mexico, big-game hunting expeditions in Wyoming, and union agitator–hunting in the immediate environs of Telluride. Frank Linderman was one of the last of

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the trappers in the continental United States, leaving his home in Chicago in 1885 as a greenhorn of sixteen to set his traps in the Flathead country of Montana. As he grew older and the animals grew fewer, he became in turn an assayer, newspaper editor, sometime state legislator, crusader for Indian rights, and ultimately recorder of Indian legends. While the journals of Livermore and Linderman are both inconsequential collections of adventure and humorous anecdotes, they do provide some of the atmosphere of the old West.

But the flavor of the West provided in Bent, Livermore, and Linderman is strikingly lacking in one aspect: The authors' descriptions of physical environments are beautiful, their accounts of adventures often enthralling. But not one fully-rounded human portrait emerges from their journals, not even of the authors themselves. The only emotion they or their characters reflect with any intensity is excitement. Bent relates with utmost casualness episodes of sheer horror, such as the practice followed by both Indians and whites of chasing their retreating enemies, catching those on inferior mounts, and killing them one by one. This same imperviousness to suffering, danger, and death also pervades the recollections of Livermore and Linderman. The people they describe are not so much human beings existing in and of themselves, as figures in a scenario whose function is to move the story along. They appear as part of the physical environment to be overcome, adjusted to, or laughed about like the weather.

Perhaps the lack of well-rounded characters is a product of the authors' literary shortcomings. Surely Linderman, who devoted his life to helping the Indians, had deeper, more human feelings than his recollections exhibit. Or so we hope. Yet it may be that these books portray the reality of the West, that (contrary to our illusions) it really was populated by the cardboard figures who relive the saga on television. ✪

Jerald Combs *is an Associate Professor of History at San Francisco State College.*

BOOKS IN BRIEF

BY FEROL EGAN

Zapata and the Mexican Revolution by John Womack, Jr. *(Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1969; 457 pp., illus., appen., biblio., index, $10.00).*

AFTER THIRTY-FOUR YEARS of tight control by President Porfirio Díaz, Mexico was ripe for revolution. For too many years things had gone according to the dictator's wishes and manipulations, and the 1910 election turned into a social upheaval and power struggle that would not be settled in the ballot box, but would ultimately shift Mexico from a country of a few "haves" and many "have nots" into a nation ruled by and for its people. Among the revolutionary leaders of the *campesinos* "people from the fields," was Emiliano Zapata.

Zapata has been treated by historians in such romantic fashion for so many years, that it is a considerable challenge to dissolve the mythology surrounding

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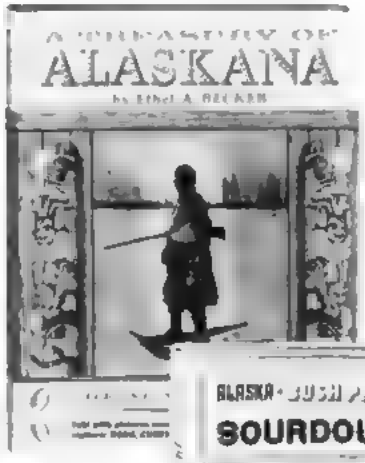

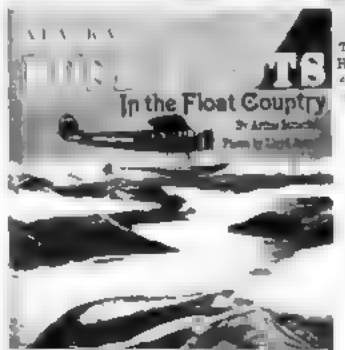

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him. But this study of the hero from the State of Morelos in south-central Mexico, is a good beginning. The picture Womack draws of the truly democratic Zapata is quite unlike the present New Left version. Zapata was not a textbook revolutionist following a Marxist philosophy, nor did he believe in military khakis, fancy officers' uniforms, or grand titles. On the contrary, this man of the people distrusted all sham, and did not wish to overthrow the government and assume the role of dictator. What he wanted was a square deal for his people, no more and no less.

Small in stature but strong and courageous, Zapata was the chosen leader of an extraordinarily democratic army. He was not a ruthless butcher like Villa or the followers of Carranza. He was not a naive idealist like Francisco Madero of Parras in the State of Coahuila. Emiliano Zapata became a revolutionary only because he was offered no other choice. The land of his people had been taken by powerful plantation owners backed by both Mexican and American capital. The choice for Zapata was demanded by his people, who called upon him to lead them in their fight for justice.

This story of Zapata's fight against greed and corruption is a model of historical research. Womack has labored long and hard with primary documents, and put together a concise study of the forces that formed a revolution and brought Mexico "populist agrarian reform . . . as a national policy." Only two things keep Womack's book from being a classic: sketchy background on characters such as Villa and Obregón, and a lack of geographical description, which tends to give the reader a poor idea of the difficulty of waging a guerrilla war from the back country. If Womack had dealt with these problems, his book would have been a classic study of Mexico's trauma. But even without these vital ingredients, *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* is a remarkable treatment of both a revolution and a revolutionary.

Ranch on the Ruidoso: The Story of a Pioneer Family in New Mexico, 1871-1968 by Wilbur Coe, introduction by Peter Hurd *(Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1968; 279 pp., illus., maps, $8.95)*

HERE IS A SLICE of southwestern history that has the quality of a folk tale. Beginning with the first member of the Coe family to come down the Santa Fé Trail from Independence, Missouri, this book deals with the building of the Coe Ranch in Lincoln County, the Coe version of the Lincoln County War and the career of Billy the Kid, the pastoral quality of New Mexico ranch life, the intermingling of *gringos* and Mexicans, and the changes brought about by the intrusion of the twentieth century. At times, the writing tends to be too folksy and too involved with trivia, but these are minor irritations. Wilbur Coe's family narrative is first-rate cultural history that belongs on any list of accounts of the cattle frontier.

'Dear Old Kit': The Historical Christopher Carson by Harvey Lewis Carter *(University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1968, 250 pp., illus., maps, notes, appen., index, $5.95).*

CARTER HAS PUT AN obsession on paper. Fascinated with Kit Carson for many years, he has tried to separate fancy from fact, myth from reality. He has carefully studied the many versions of Carson's life; picked up the mountain man's trail in all the histories, biographies, and journals of the fur trade; and followed Carson's later career with such men as John C. Frémont and Edward Fitzgerald Beale. Yet the elusive Kit has not been trapped.

Two things protect the mythical Kit Carson: the absence of any truly straightforward autobiography and the persistence of legend in the face of fact and logic. At best, Carter has given western scholars all the available information about this larger-than-life hero and left several options of belief. Unfortunately, he has made Kit Carson even harder to find by surrounding him with a wilderness of scholarship often confounding the reader by running footnotes in columns alongside the text—a dubious device which sometimes places notes a page or more ahead of the material.

The most intriguing thing about this book is that when a reader has finished it he seems to know everything about Kit Carson and yet nothing. The nagging question lingers on. Who was the *real* Kit Carson and what was he *really* like?

Personal Recollections and Observations of General Nelson A. Miles, introduction by Robert M. Utley *(Da Capo Press, New York, 1969; 590 pp., illus., biblio., $27.50)*

THIS REPRINT OF THE 1896 edition, complete with graphics by Frederic Remington and other artists, is a classic that belongs in any library of western history. While General Miles was not a West Point man, he developed himself into a first-rate military leader. He entered the Civil War as a young lieutenant and rose to the rank of a major general in the Volunteers. But it was during the Indian Wars that he achieved his lasting fame against such outstanding warriors as the Sioux, Cheyennes, Nez Percés, and Apaches. While professional army officers disliked Miles, they could not hold him back. Before his retirement in 1903, he had reached the rank of Commanding General of the Army. The death of this crusty character could not have occurred in more fitting a manner. "In the spring of 1925 he took his grandchildren to the circus. The band played the National Anthem. While standing erectly at attention, rendering the military salute to the flag, he collapsed with a heart attack."

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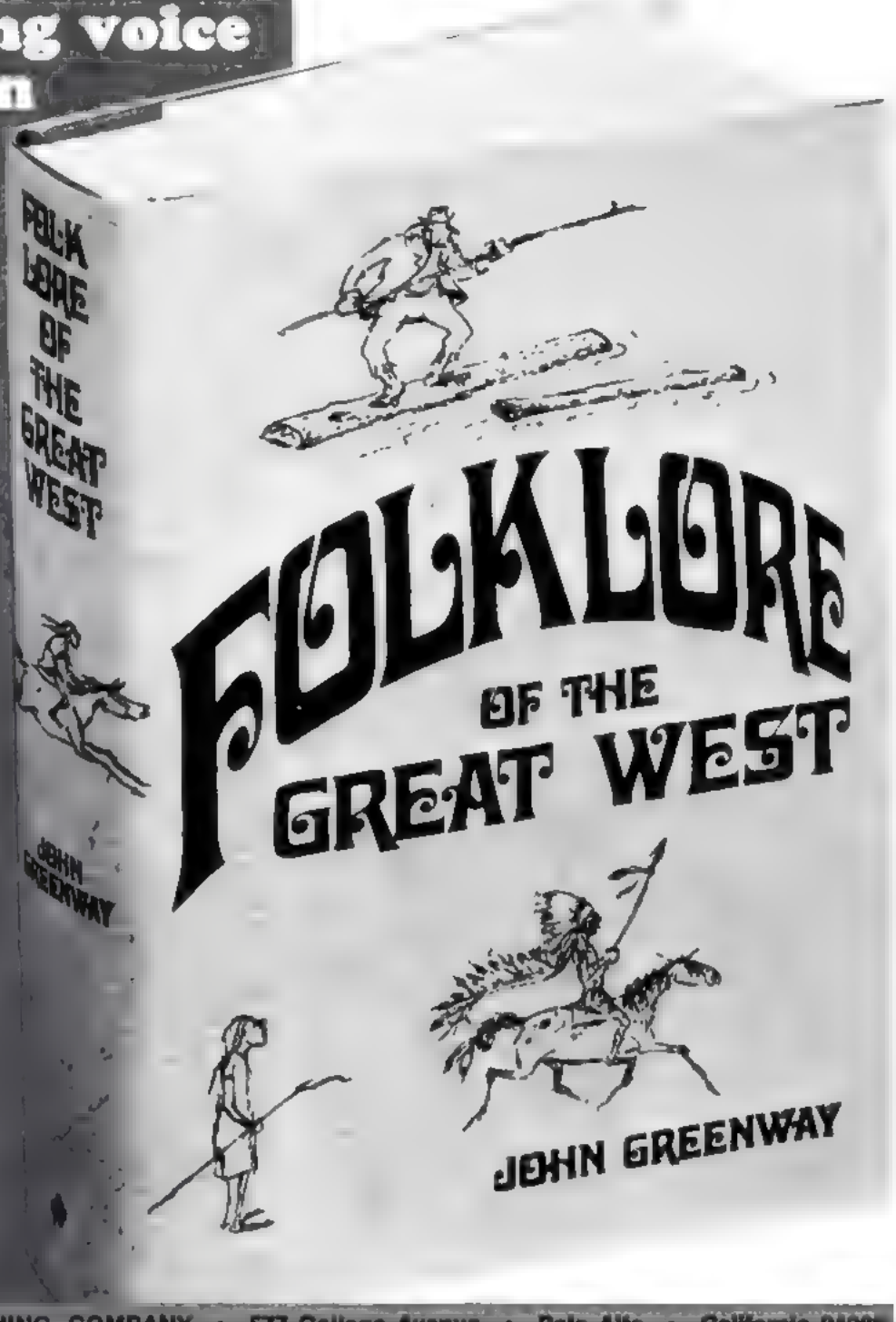

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Conquest of the Colorado

Continued from page 48

the Colorado's dam complex was started. In 1944 the United States signed an international treaty with Mexico, guaranteeing that nation one million five hundred thousand acre-feet of Colorado River water a year, and in 1953 completed Davis Dam, about halfway between Parker and Boulder (by then renamed Hoover) dams, to regulate the delivery of water to Mexico. Another dam was added to the lower river in 1957, when the Palo Verde Diversion Dam was completed as a flood control and irrigation project, and still another when the Headgate Rock Diversion Dam was strung across the river a few miles below Parker Dam.

The upper stem of the Colorado got its first major improvement with the completion of the 700-foot Glen Canyon Dam in 1965—a dam that surely matched the scope and drama of Boulder Dam itself, but which somehow failed to capture the public imagination and support that the earlier, pioneering effort had enjoyed. The Green River—the Colorado's left arm—had received Flaming Gorge Dam earlier, and above it, the Fontanelle Dam.

Today, the Colorado River Project has swollen to become the Colorado River **Basin** Project, taking under its supervisory wing an area one-twelfth the size of the forty-eight states: 245,000 square miles, or 157,000,000 acres. The bureau's reclamation proposals for this immense territory were contained in its Pacific Southwest Water Plan of 1964, which formed the basis of its forthcoming requests for legislative authorization of a number of projects whose total cost would exceed $1,250,000,000—more than three times the cost of the Colorado River Project of the 1930's. In addition to the fourteen dams already in operation on the Colorado and its tributaries, the Basin Project calls for another twelve (two of which are already under construction), together with numerous major and minor diversion and irrigation works. Two of the largest projects proposed were a dam at Marble Gorge and the Central Arizona Project. Marble Gorge Dam, in the words of the Bureau of Reclamation, "would be the initial cash register unit for the project. The revenue from the sale of power produced at its power plant would help pay for the construction of all facilities proposed." Responding to various public pressures, the bureau has decided to "defer" this particular project to some indefinite future, which by no means implies that it has been abandoned. The Central Arizona Project, which includes a 300-mile open canal to divert 1,200,000 acre-feet of Colorado River water from Parker Dam to central and south-central Arizona and four multipurpose dams on the Gila River system, was authorized by Congress in 1968.

Even while it makes its proposals on such a grand scale, the bureau has long since recognized that there simply is not enough water in the Colorado River to support them: "Demands for water may very well exceed the remaining uncommitted supplies within the next 25 or 35 years. An obvious solution to the problem, in the bureau's view, is to go to another source to supplement nature's lack of foresight, and the source instantly mentioned has always been the Columbia River. The Pacific Northwest has let it be known in no uncertain terms that it rejects the whole idea, but the bureau is confident that the area's reactionary stand can be overcome diplomatically. As Regional Director Robert J. Pafford, Jr., put it in a 1966 speech before the Southwest Regional Water Resources Symposium, "We can see no reason why an import aqueduct should not serve both regions with multipurpose water benefits. Our entire western water program has been built on statesmanship. We feel confident that this same statesmanship will prevail and the water 'haves' can share with the water 'have-nots' with both of them reaping multiple dividends."

In less than seventy years, then, the wildest, freest river in the West has been transformed into one of the greatest plumbing systems in the history of the world. Many of its most beautiful canyons—Black Canyon, Glen Canyon, Flaming Gorge—have been drowned by the waters rising behind all the great dams. Future developments point to a time when the entire river system will be converted into an enormous pipeline. Surely this will be one of the most admirably expansive engineering marvels of the century, and yet. . . .

We are allowed to wonder whether the Bureau of Reclamation has ever heard of the Red Queen's admonition to Alice: "Continue until you get to the end, then stop." We are allowed to wonder, too, whether there is anyone left who will ever again want to write a poem to a dam.

The story of the conquest of the Colorado has been documented by a diverse selection of materials ranging from the official *Reports* of the Bureau of Reclamation to a wide scattering of newspaper and magazine articles, whose number testifies to the degree of public fascination that the project inspired, and books. For the purposes of this narrative, however, I have relied principally upon the following sources.

The history of the development of Imperial Valley and its relationship to the Colorado has been admirably documented by Helen Hosmer in "Imperial Valley: Triumph and Failure in the Colorado Desert" (THE AMERICAN WEST, Winter, 1965) and by Robert G. Schoenfeld in "The Early Development of California's Imperial Valley" (*Southern California Quarterly*, September and December, 1968). The formation and economic alliances of the Six Companies, Incorporated, has been revealed in almost startling detail in "The Earth Movers. The Epic of the Six Companies of the West" (*Fortune* magazine, August, 1943). Boulder (Hoover) Dam itself came under exhaustive scrutiny in a number of contemporary accounts, most of them celebrating it as a triumph of civilization. Chief among these were "Hoover Dam: Purposes, Plans, and Progress of Construction," by Walter R. Young (*Scientific American*, October, 1932), "Administration of the Boulder Dam Project Area" (*Science*, March 3, 1933), "The Colorado River's Newest Dam," by Andrew R. Boone (*Scientific American*, December, 1935), and "The Construction of Boulder Dam," by Elwood Mead (*Literary Digest*, November 4, 1933). Considerably more thoughtful about the dam's meaning and purposes was Theodore White's "Building the Big Dam" (*Harper's*, June, 1935). The Colorado River Aqueduct and All-American Canal were the subjects of "Steel Arteries for Boulder Dam," by R. G. Skerrett (*Scientific American*, October, 1934), and "Building the World's Largest Aqueduct," by Robert D. Speers (*Scientific American*, September, 1934). These last (like all the articles on the subject in *Scientific American*) provide a wealth of technical details that are most useful—providing the layman can survive them.

The shift from general approbation for such projects to an attitude of sharp questioning and outright opposition following World War II was documented in a number of magazine articles whose appearance provided a kind of running commentary on the Bureau of Reclamation's increasingly ambitious plans for the river. Chief among these were "The Colorado is Sovereign," by Carey McWilliams (*The Nation*, April 9, 1949), "Just One Dam After Another," by Robert Moley (*Newsweek*, June 18, 1951), "And Fractions Drive Me Mad," by Bernard DeVoto (*Harper's*, September, 1954), "The Colorado Dam Controversy," by A. M. Woodbury (*Scientific Monthly*, April, 1957), and "Dams Will Squeeze the River's Last Drop" (*Life*, December 22, 1961).

Major, book-length studies of the building of Boulder Dam do not abound, but two of marginal value do exist. *So Boulder Dam Was Built* by George A. Pettit (Six Companies, Inc., 1935) was designed, and reads, as a detailed *apologeia* for the labor practices of the Six Companies. Nevertheless, its very detail provides a wealth of anecdotal material. *The Colorado Conquest* by David O. Woodbury (New York, 1941) is a sometimes crude and sometimes effective attempt at what might be called the "non-fiction novel"—antedating Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* by more than a quarter of a century. Creating composite characters who are meant to represent the "little people"—the farmers of Imperial Valley, dam workers, etc.—and combining a fictional treatment of them with a factual account of the development of the Colorado River Project, *The Colorado Conquest* is an effort to document the human purposes of Boulder Dam; it is only partially successful. Frank Waters, who devoted a large portion of *The Colorado* (New York, 1946) to the Colorado River Project, is considerably more reliable, even though his narrative is touched with the same romanticism that hampers Woodbury. Much cooler in his approach than either Waters or Woodbury is Remi Nadeau in *The Water Seekers* (New York, 1950). *The Water Seekers* is the best single study of man's utilization of the Colorado, and its discussion of the political, economical, and financial entanglements that characterized the Colorado River Project (and which continue to haunt us today) has made it the classic study in the field.

Jornada del Muerto

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might be occupied by waiting Apaches. Most companies of miners rode at least fifteen or twenty miles a day, taking between ten days and two weeks to make the trip. On the journey they traveled through the natural chute of this vast tableland, passed through Governor Don Ángel Trías's Hacienda Encinillas, the **poblados** of El Saucillo, Galeana, the ruins of Casas Grandes, the town of Corralitos, and the last outpost — Janos.

All during 1849 and 1850, many companies of California emigrants passed through this route. Yet few took time to describe the ruins of the ancient Indian city of Casas Grandes. The Indians the gold seekers were concerned about were the very-much-alive Apaches. When Harvey Wood of the Kit Carson Association passed Casas Grandes and rode into Janos in May 1849, he saw that the town was "in the possession of six Apache Indians, who were amusing themselves by riding from store to store and making the proprietors furnish liquor or anything else they demanded." That same month Durivage looked at Janos and thought it "a town of very little importance and **muy pobre** in all the necessaries of life." He noticed that it was a garrison town where constant warfare with the Apaches was causing a steady drop in population.

The Hampden Mining Company took eight days to travel the 269 miles from Chihuahua City to Janos. They had combined forces with another company for added protection and, except for A. B. Clarke, arrived in good shape for the mountain trip over the Guadalupe Pass. During the ride from Chihuahua City, Clarke's knees had become so badly swollen that he had to be lifted on and off his mount. There was nothing to do but leave him in Janos until he was able to travel. Before his companions moved on, they found a room for him in the **alcalde's** home. It wasn't fancy, and Clarke complained about his bed — his blankets placed on cow hides on a hard-packed dirt floor. But despite his self-pity, he was carefully nursed and fed by the **alcalde's** mother, who was concerned about his **reumatismo doloroso,** and within two weeks he was well enough to travel again.

He joined a Missouri company of seventy emigrants and prepared to leave right away. Janos was not a place to tarry. The California emigrants moved in and out of it with a haste born of fear and fever — fear of the violent land in this heart of Apacheria, and fever to get to El Dorado before all the gold nuggets had been picked up and pocketed. It took the same number of letters to spell **adiós** and Janos, and goldseekers were inclined to equate one word with the other.

Northwest from here was the hardest journey of any branch of the El Dorado Trail. A man did well to stay alive even if the Apaches didn't collect his scalp. The California emigrant had no trouble in finding traps to test his courage and stamina in the wild upside-down country, and the worst trap of all was the trail leading northwest out of Janos and through the Guadalupe Pass. Some called it "Cooke's Wagon Road," but they hadn't been there, nor did they know what Lieutenant Colonel Philip St. George Cooke and his Mormon Battalion had gone through while crossing the mountains with wagons. To make matters even more difficult for the naive and innocent goldseekers who took this route, most of them were almost worn out by the time they reached Janos.

The Apache menace became even clearer to various parties of Argonauts as they rode through a country of rich grass and plenty of water between Janos and the pass. In this fertile land more than one company of emigrants had encounters with the warriors of Apacheria. Joseph Pownall, who had arrived at Janos via El Paso del Norte, wrote that his party had camped no more than fifteen miles outside the city when they were suddenly confronted with a band of Apaches. To Pownall these warriors seemed to outnumber his party by at least three times. They were savage-looking men, and all of them were armed "some with bows and arrows, some with lances and others with guns." Tension was somewhat relieved when one of the Apaches rode toward them carrying a white flag. The emigrants quickly searched for something white to wave and ended up holding a sheepskin aloft. Slowly and cautiously, the Indians rode into their camp following an Apache who was tall in the saddle and sat bolt-upright. As the Apaches dismounted for a talk, the miners were astounded at the size of this leader.

The man, who was obviously the chief of these Mimbreños Apaches, was no ordinary man. He stood well over six feet tall, though the bulk of his height was in his powerful torso. His legs were short and bowed, and on a lesser man would have seemed comical. Not so with this man, for his large head, his alert deep-socketed eyes, his jutting chin, and his high-bridged nose curving downward toward a wide and sensitive mouth marked him as a man to be reckoned with. This was Mangas Coloradas, called "Red Sleeves" by the **gringos.**

In his description of their meeting, Joseph Pownall wrote that Mangas Coloradas and his braves wanted tobacco but were very interested in a Negro member of the company. Apparently, this was the first black man they had ever seen, and they were very curious about his color.

Other parties of emigrants had meetings with Mangas Coloradas on the trail outside of Janos, but none ever reported a direct conflict with him. Durivage wrote of a story he had heard at Galeana, near Corralitos, in the spring of 1849, about a battle between a party of Texans and a large band of Indians on the western side of the Sierra Madre — a battle in which only two of twenty Americans escaped with their lives. However, Durivage only reported hearsay. Proof of this battle was not recorded by other goldseekers who kept journals, and it is highly unlikely that such a conflict would have been overlooked by the considerable number of travelers who took this route, if there had been any substance to the story.

Northwest of Janos was that "easy" pass across the Sierra Madre Occidental, that pass called Guadalupe. All companies taking this branch of the El Dorado Trail had this route marked on their maps, circled, and underlined. From the Guadalupe Pass the journey to California was going to be child's play so they believed. The route was well marked. All they had to do, they thought was follow the trail that Spaniards and Mexicans had been using for centuries. There would be mule tracks, even marks from big wheels of Mexican **carretas,** and tracks from U.S. Army wagons. Hadn't Lieutenant Colonel Cooke and his battalion taken wagons over these mountains, in 1846, in jig-time? Hadn't Major Lawrence P. Graham and the Second Dragoons gotten across without any trouble? This was going to be a waltz after what they'd been through on the desert!

The trouble with the Guadalupe Pass was the same kind of trouble emigrants had been having all along the way, the terrain. The spoken word, the guidebooks, the maps scratched on the ground did not really tell them what kind of country they were taking their wagons through. True enough, Lieutenant Colonel Cooke and the Mormon boys had made it with wagons in the fall of 1846, as had Lieutenant Graham and his Dragoons in 1848. But what the emigrants didn't know or simply ignored was that the Mormon Battalion had gone through hell in following General Stephen Watts Kearny's orders to establish a wagon road through the mountains southwest of Santa Fé. Lieutenant Graham had had no better luck — if anything, worse.

Into this maze of **barrancas,** hogback ridges, and cliffs that looked as though they had been sheared off with a giant butcher knife of creation came the Argonauts. They came on foot, on horseback, on muleback. They pulled wagons with oxen, mules, and their own hands. Some of them knew where they were going, or at the very least,

thought they knew. Others didn't know at all, but had hired guides who might or might not be reliable. Their approach toward Guadalupe Pass came from a number of directions, all of them equally treacherous. This country played no favorites. It tended to make the points on the compass into a kind of shell game. If you were very lucky, you hit the pass on the nose and got across without too much trouble. If you were running true to form, nothing about this pass turned out to be easy. And if you hit a streak of bad luck, the Guadalupe Pass was elusive, the mountains almost impossible to climb, the Apaches unfriendly, and the weather either blistering hot or wet and freezing.

Two parties crossed the pass during the second week of May 1849. Durivage was with one company and Clarke with the other. Durivage looked at the Sierra Madre country with amazement — awed by its deep valleys and high mountains, impressed with its abundance of wild game, water, rich grassy meadows for livestock, and thick groves of oaks, cedars, and pines. But he worried about the possibility of an Apache raid and was extremely apprehensive about the steep mountains that shut out the setting sun early in the afternoon and stood as blue, shadowed obstacles that looked like the final barriers to the movement of wagons.

Clarke, however, with his weak knees, rode in a wagon all the way over the pass. Like Durivage and his party, he was with a group of men who were trying to follow Major Graham's nonexistent trail. As they approached the central ridges of the **sierra,** Clarke could sense that there simply wasn't much of a wagon passage. "I do not believe," he wrote, "that Hannibal carried his baggage into Italy by a more difficult mountain passage. We passed over some ravines, the sides of which seemed pretty closely approaching the perpendicular."

But Clarke and Durivage were only two of many emigrants who worked their way across Guadalupe Pass during 1849 and 1850. And while all their experiences had much in common, some of the others described different aspects of this mountain trail. Two members of the Peoria Company, who hit the pass by coming northwest of El Paso del Norte and through the Animas Mountains, wrote of the difficulty they had in getting their wagons up and down the steep inclines. Casper S. Ricks never forgot how they let the wagons down with ropes; and Charles Edward Pancoast remembered how they drove between eight and ten oxen to the top of a hill and then had them pull the wagons up "by ropes at least a hundred feet long." But of all the emigrants who crossed the Guadalupe Pass, none left a better description of it than artist H. M. T. Powell of the Illinois Company.

" . . . an interminable jumble of peaks, rocks, deep, dark ravines, and gullies in endless confusion, through which no waggon could pass by any possibility. We found the road exceedingly rough; many of the declivities and acclivities being such as appeared almost impracticable. One place in particular it was not only fearfully steep, but it took a very short turn on the outside a steep descent, where to upset was to be utterly lost."

From twenty to twenty five miles beyond Guadalupe Pass, emigrant parties came to the abandoned Rancho San Bernardino. Situated in a basin forming the headwaters of the Yaqui River, the adobe buildings of the ranch were in the shadow of the hills bordering the western side of the valley. Powell wrote that it was a large establishment built within a quadrangle of about three acres. "On the West side are the main building and offices. On the North, a range of houses or rooms extended the whole length. A long bastion is placed at the North East corner, and another at the South West. Near the latter is what we supposed to be a furnace for melting ore."

From Rancho San Bernardino, the emigrants took between five and seven days to travel the remaining distance from the Sierra Madre heights to the Santa Cruz Valley in northern Sonora. This descent on the Pacific slopes usually covered about 130 miles and took a route that closely paralleled the present boundary between the state of Sonora, Mexico and Arizona. The goldseekers looked upon Santa Cruz with both delight and despair. After the long dry hauls across the southwestern plains and the Mexican tableland and after the hard work of crossing the Sierra Madre, the location of this town was a beautiful sight. The mountains to the east and west were well timbered. The Rio Santa Cruz ran a steady and clear stream of water. The valley was broad and fertile, and as they descended the last ridge to the valley floor, the parched travelers saw tall cottonwoods, fruit trees, and cultivated fields of corn and wheat. After all they had been through, this seemed like the sudden entrance into paradise. But as they rode and walked into town, their vision of a paradise was altered by the realities of frontier existence. Closely examined, Santa Cruz — town of the Holy Cross — was tranished around its edges, rundown, in places crumbling and very near the edge of collapse.

From Santa Cruz to Tucson was a little more than one hundred miles. Travelers usually averaged about twenty miles a day on this stretch, the determining factors lay with the individuals. Some men were too tired to move quickly. Some suffered too much from the desert heat, as they usually reached this region in late summer or early fall. A few curious emigrants took time out to visit and examine the remains of old Spain that marked this route: Tumacacori Mission, Tubac, and San Xavier del Bac.

The landscape of the Sonoran Desert made its first impact upon the emigrants outside Tubac. Here, as they continued on to Tucson, they left the cottonwoods, willows, fruit trees, and fertile land of the Santa Cruz Valley. All around them the country was dry, sandy, and barren. Cacti of many types replaced trees. Mesquite and greasewood hugged close to the earth, and the heat of summer or early fall made each mile into an endless procession of painful steps. Tucson, the last Mexican town the goldseekers would see on their trip to California offered very little in the way of man-made beauty, and its surrounding desert terrain was not admired by men who had a lot of desert yet to cross. At best, Tucson was a place to pick up information about the trail ahead and to barter for supplies. At worst, the town was under constant threat of Apache attack, for this Sonoran **pueblo** was "the most northern presidio of the frontier." More than once, it had been beseiged by as many as "1,000 to 2,000 warriors." It was not a place in which to linger, and the emigrants were quick to leave it. Tucson consisted of flat-rooted adobe houses smack in the middle of nowhere — a nowhere that had become a somewhere to gold-fevered men. Tucson was a somewhere to get extra water, extra melons, and extra food of any kind. It was somewhere to ask about the trail ahead. And while descriptions of the trail to the Gila and Colorado rivers did not sound pleasant or easy, nobody said it was long. Most important, at Tucson men heard about Mexicans who had already returned from California with as much gold as they could carry. The lure of all that gold just waiting to be picked up became even more important than before, with only some three-hundred miles before the Colorado crossing and the entrance to California. The emigrants knew the trail ahead ran through part of America's Great Desert and would not be easy. But they had already been through country that might have been a model for the canyons and plains of hell. So, with an anxious **adiós,** they headed out of Tucson and hit the Gila Trail.

They soon discovered they had only entered the desert. The fact that the Gila at least provided water was one of two positive things they could count on before reaching its confluence with the Rio Colorado. The other aid for travelers in this desolate country was the existence of the Pima and Coco-Maricopa Indian villages scattered along the Gila. Most Argonauts liked these Indian farmers very much and praised them highly. When Durivage first saw the Pimas, he had almost perished and

was totally exhausted. As he recovered, he observed the Pimas and considered them a very handsome people. "The men," he wrote, "are well formed and athletic, the women bright eyed, talkative, and symmetrical. The prevailing costume is the breechcloth for the man, and a scant serape, or blanket, pinned around the loins of the women, reaching nearly to the knees."

Yet even though these Indians were a great help to the emigrants, one dreadful fact remained. It was a long **jornada** between Tucson and the Pima villages alongside the Gila. Many men almost died on this trip; some did. All along the way dead livestock and discarded wagons and supplies marked the Gila Trail. When Clarke traveled this route, the weather was so hot he could hardly bear it. He and his exhausted companions walked and stumbled through the sand, following each other's dust clouds, trying to avoid thorny plants and buzzing rattlesnakes that seemed to be beneath anything that offered the least bit of shade. As their mules gradually gave out, Clarke later recalled, most of the suffering animals were shot. Upon reaching the Gila and the first villages of the Pimas, many goldseekers decided there had to be an easier way. Taking a heavily loaded wagon the rest of the way wasn't worth it. They were next to a river. Why not use it? Camps were pitched, and men with know-how went to work, taking their wagons apart to build rafts and flat-bottomed boats.

Of all such voyages down the Gila, one of the most unusual took place in the fall of 1849. Some members of the Peoria Company built two rafts from the sideboards of their wagons, fashioned oars, attached ropes for lines, made do with two stone anchors, and erected a shed on one raft to shelter a Missourian's pregnant wife. A few men were sent on ahead with the lighter wagons and the livestock to wait at the Río Colorado. The rafts were launched and the voyage began. By the time the wagons reached the Colorado, the four men and one woman who had taken the rafts had been waiting for them for six days. The voyage, they said, had been easy, and there really wasn't much worth mentioning.

Nothing worth mentioning, ". . . except that on the third day out the Woman was taken with Labor Pains." They quickly landed their make-shift boats on a sand-bar next to a thicket of willows. Here the husband took some blankets and pillows, carried his wife to what seclusion there was, and delivered her of a baby girl while the others waited on the boats. That evening the other men came ashore and helped the new father carry his wife and child back on board. The next morning they continued on their voyage with the little baby girl that all the men wanted to name Gila. The second day after giving birth, the baby's mother was once again preparing the meals for the men, and continued to do so during the rest of the voyage.

For companies who did not build boats or rafts, the trip along the Gila to its junction with the Colorado was marked with the stench of dead oxen, mules, and horses that were being eaten by turkey buzzards. All along the trail were the droppings of parties in distress: yokes, chains, wagons, spare axles, cooking utensils, mining equipment, gunpowder, firearms, fishhooks, even buttons. The soil the men and their animals moved through was sandy dust with the consistency of ashes. "All our camps are 'dust holes.' We eat dust, drink dust, breathe dust, and sleep in dust!"

To the overland companies the march along the Gila was a march through a desert they had only imagined. Yet even in their imaginations, they had never conjured a true picture of what it was like to cross such land. Dust, sand, a botanical world of thorny plants and trees, distant mountains that looked like the work of evil stonemasons and gave no indication of water or life — this was the Gila Trail. Yet in 1849 and 1850, the goldseekers traveled it in great numbers. During the clear desert nights the route up and down the Río Gila was outlined by campfires. The flickering, golden markers were like a crooked chain of nuggets — a chain of men with a golden dream, a chain of men bound for the Colorado crossing and the riches of California.

Throughout mankind's history the crossing of rivers has marked a shedding of boundaries, an advance into a new or strange land, and the change of individual and national destinies. Thus, for these '49ers the Río Colorado was the final step on their quest. On one side of the river was Mexico and the long journey they had just endured. On the opposite shore was California and what they thought would be a short trip to fortune.

Estimates of the number of Americans who crossed the Colorado into California during the Gold Rush vary considerably, though any examination of journals, diaries, letters, newspaper stories, and other accounts makes it clear that during 1849–1850 the number must have been quite large. Perhaps a conservative estimate would be at least ten thousand. Most of these emigrants had traveled through some part of Mexico, either by intention or out of ignorance of geography. However, they did know that one of the major points on their maps was the confluence of the Gila and Colorado rivers — the last stop before an easy trip across the river and the Colorado Desert to the golden land.

What they could not believe was that it was not going to be easy to crawl across the Colorado Desert. Instead it was going to be another season in hell. Men and animals would drop alongside each other for lack of water. Wells would be hard to find and, if found, would hold only enough water for a small number of men and mules — never enough for the thousands of dry throats and swollen tongues that came panting to them. Some waterholes would be covered with green scum and mosquitos or polluted by bloated and half-eaten carcasses of dead mules and oxen. Then as if to make an insane jest of their own sentence in the sun, some emigrants left a weird sight for others to see. These men mocked death by propping dry, almost mummified bodies of horses, mules, and oxen in a line alongside the trail as ghostly markers on a deadly path.

Like everything else on the northern branch of the El Dorado Trail, the last barrier turned out to be almost final. The golden color in the seekers' eyes turned out to be the glare of a fiery sun. The real El Dorado was still ahead. Worse yet, it was hiding in the earth, difficult — and for most of them, impossible — to find. Many — too many — endured the agonies of this final **Jornada del Muerto** to find only the end of an impossible dream.

The bibliography for *The El Dorado Trail* will give a thorough documentation for readers wishing to know the many leads I followed in retracing the footsteps of the goldseekers across Mexico. However, there are direct quotations in this adaptation, and they were taken from the following sources: *John James Audubon* by Alexander B. Adams (New York, 1966). *Audubon's Western Journal: 1849–1850*, edited by Frank Heywood Hodder (Glendale, 1906). "Illustrated Notes of an Expedition through Mexico and California, 1849–50," by John Woodhouse Audubon (*Magazine of History*, XI, Extra Number 41, 1936). *Travels In Mexico and California*, by A. B. Clark (Boston, 1852). "Through Mexico to California: The Letters and Journal of John E. Durivage" in *Southern Trails to California in 1849*, edited by Ralph Bieber (Glendale, 1937). "To California through Texas and Mexico," by Thomas B. Eastland (California Historical Society *Quarterly*, XVIII, 1939). *Mexican Gold Trail: The Journal of a Forty-Niner* (George W. B. Evans), edited by Glenn S. Dumke (San Marino, 1945). *A Quaker Forty-Niner: The Adventures of Charles Edward Pancoast on the American Frontier*, edited by Anna Paschall Hannum (Philadelphia, 1930). *The Santa Fé Trail to California, 1849–1852: The Journal and Drawings of H. M. T. Powell*, edited by Douglas S. Watson (San Francisco, 1931). "From Louisana to Mariposa" (Joseph Pownall), edited by Robert Glass Cleland; in *Rushing for Gold*, edited by John Walton Caughey (Berkeley, 1949). *Personal Recollections of Harvey Wood*, introduction by John B. Goodman III (Pasadena, 1955). "Through Northern Mexico in '49," by Oliver M. Wozencraft (*The Californian*, November, 1882). *Sonora: Its Extent, Population, Natural Productions, Indian Tribes, Mines, Mineral Lands, etc.*, by José Francisco Velasco; translated by William F. Nye (San Francisco, 1861).

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